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## VIVALDI'S THE FOUR SEASONS

WHOSE RECORDING  
IS BEST - CARMIGNOLA,  
KENNEDY OR MUTTER?

BEYOND 'DUDEMANIA'

# GUSTAVO DUDAMEL

*What the man behind the hype  
really thinks about music*

*'Sibelius was  
like an explosion  
in my head'*

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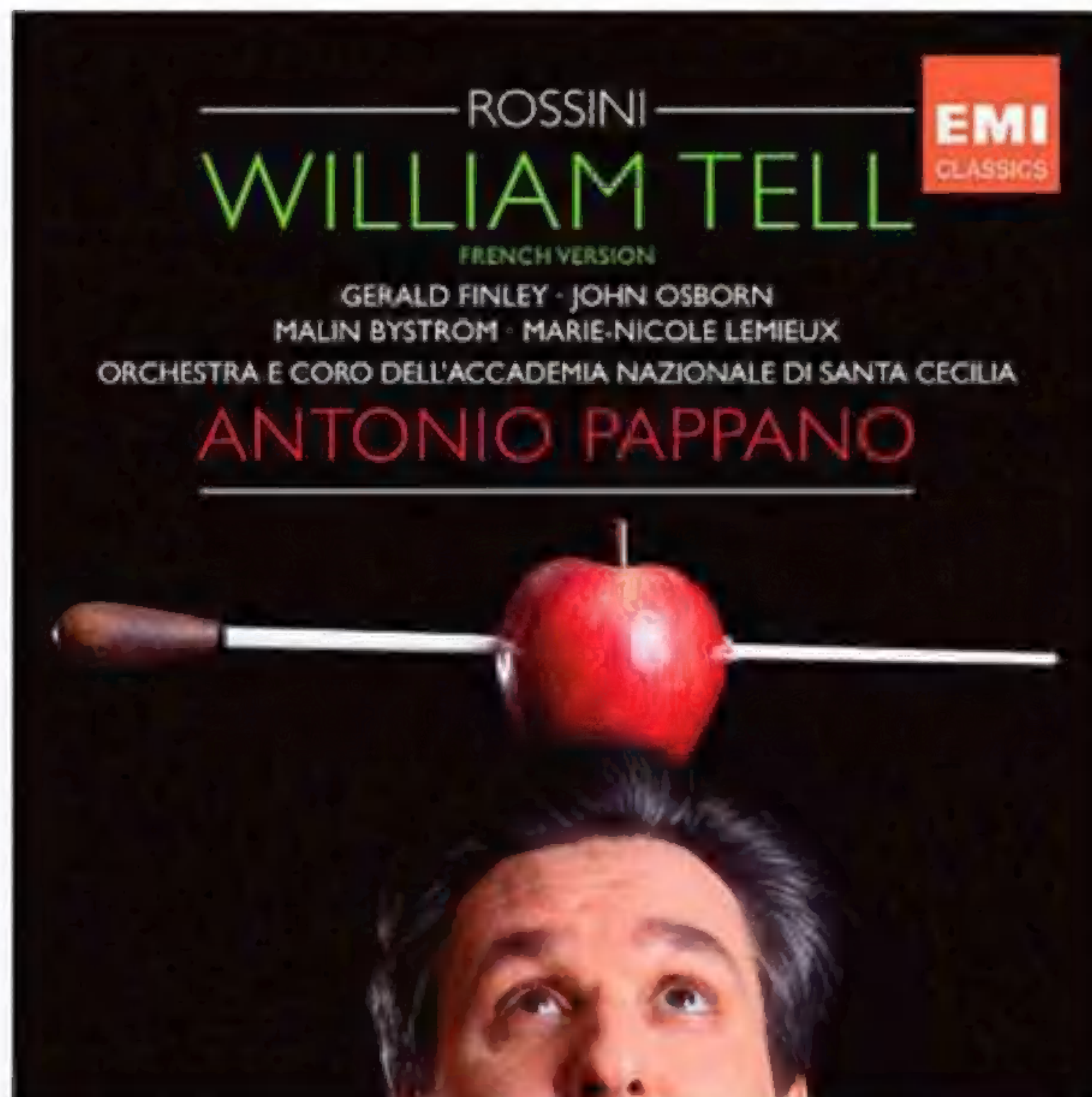
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# July highlights

from EMI and Virgin Classics

## Spotlight release



## Rossini: William Tell

### Antonio Pappano

Antonio Pappano and the choir and orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia present Rossini's final French opera seria, *William Tell*, recorded live in concert last autumn in Rome. Canadian baritone Gerald Finley leads a stellar international cast boasting tenor John Osborn, mezzo Marie-Nicole Lemieux, and sopranos Elena Xanthoudakis and Malin Byström in the story of Switzerland's legendary founding fathers and the courageous folk hero forced to shoot an apple from his son's head.

"There is nothing quite like Rossini played by Italian musicians, as Pappano's Santa Cecilia *Stabat Mater* demonstrated four years ago. This *William Tell* promises to be even more of a highlight." **The Sunday Times**

## Also new this month



### The British Composers Guide to Britain

This bright and breezy guide takes us in 50 stops from London, round Essex and East Anglia, up to Scotland, then – via Wales and the border counties – to the west country and the south coast. Finally, back to the capital, and a quiet diminuendo as we drift down the Thames.



### Britten, Berkeley & Rubbra

Amongst a host of première recordings, this set collects for the first time the 1948 scenes from *Grimes* (with original cast and conductor), the 1947 Glyndebourne *Lucretia* (also under Goodall), and the early HMV recordings of the two sonnet cycles by Pears. Alongside those works and Britten's two concertos are fascinatingly set contemporaneous recordings of Rubbra and Berkeley.



### Arthur Bliss

This enthralling five-CD conspectus opens with the symphony that established Bliss's name in 1922 and goes on to survey his ballet, film, chamber and vocal music in authoritative recordings, many of them attended and endorsed by the composer. The final disc shows Bliss as unmatched conductor of his own music and Dame Joan Sutherland's first studio recording, the *Song of Welcome*.



### Best of British

The best of British music: after a disc of such evergreen light favourites as *Elizabethan Serenade* and the *Dambusters March*, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett takes us from the dizzy displays of Billy Mayerl to the dark despair of Constant Lambert. The late Richard Hickox reveals the charm of the English miniature and the Choir of King's College, Cambridge in 19th- and 20th-century anthems.



# GRAMOPHONE

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## THE GRAMOPHONE PODCAST

Leading artists discuss their latest releases: this month Edward Higginbottom on Mozart's Requiem and Joseph Calleja on his new arias disc. Find us on iTunes.

## GRAMOPHONE TOP 10s

The concept is simple: prompted by a topical event or anniversary, we publish weekly lists of recommended recordings – we hope they will open your ears to some great new music!



Ingrid Fliter: 'It is wonderful to encounter a pianist of such exalted yet natural and unforced artistry'



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*vi·bra·tion*: the oscillating, reciprocating, or other periodic motion of a rigid or elastic body or medium forced from a position or state of equilibrium.

*Vocal resonance* is the process by which the basic product of phonation is enhanced in timbre and/or *intensity* by the air-filled cavities through which it passes on its way to the outside air. Various terms related to the resonance process include amplification, *enrichment*, enlargement, *improvement*, intensification, and prolongation. The main point to be drawn from these terms by a *singer* or speaker is that the end result of resonance is, or should be, to make a *better sound*.



## JOSEPH CALLEJA THE MALTESE TENOR

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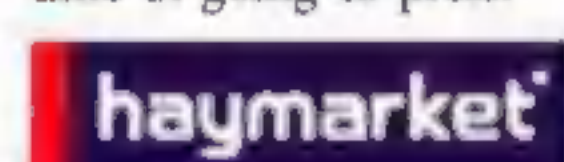
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## Our Contributors



**MARK SWED**, who interviews Gustavo Dudamel for this issue, is the chief music critic for the *Los Angeles Times*. He has written books on the composers Peter Lieberman, John Cage, Bright Sheng and Aaron Jay Kernis.



*Gramophone* reviewer **WILLIAM YEOMAN** concentrates his writing on music for the guitar. Another string instrument beckoned for this issue, though, as he surveyed all the recordings of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*. And survived.



**ALBAN GERHARDT**'s father was a violinist in the Berlin Philharmonic. The son has become a much-admired cellist. He records for Hyperion and writes this month's Diary.

## Our Reviewers

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\*Contributing editor

**EDITORIAL**

# GRAMOPHONE

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## Surprise – asking a musician about music



There are few – but there are a few – things in classical music's recent history that can reasonably be classed with that overused term "a phenomenon". Of those that would seem to be part of *Gramophone*'s world, the Three Tenors, Nigel Kennedy's early rise and Daniel Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra would all qualify. Yet arguably even more stirring to the public at large has been the story of Gustavo Dudamel and El Sistema.

I use the word "story" advisedly, for this has been a sensation that has first and foremost been tied to the tale of its own genesis. That is fair enough; who is not moved by the ideals of the Venezuelan system that puts instruments into the hands and musical education into the minds of kids from slums, showing them – playing to them – dreams of a better life?

We have all been stirred by this and we applaud the many places that are now launching similar "sistemas". I cannot, however, put off the "but" any longer. So here it comes.

But – there is a bit of a disadvantage to all this for those who think Dudamel is as interesting for what he thinks about the music itself as for

'All the media want to ask Dudamel about is El Sistema. That's dangerous for him, because it takes away any real sense of interpretative vision'

what he contributes socially to the world through music. Which is that he never gets to talk about it. Almost all the media tend to want to ask him about is El Sistema. That's dangerous for him, because it takes away any real sense of an interpretative vision, of a through-line to his performances. Then, when the media descend on some big concert with the LA Phil, for instance, it becomes a one-off judgement as far as headline writers are concerned. Put crudely (it often is), it's "Is he worth the hype?"

Interviews with Dudamel are rare but he was more than happy to sit down for *Gramophone* with that fine writer Mark Swed (who, as the major LA-based critic, knows Dudamel's work intimately) to discuss – well, music and almost nothing but. As ever, when you ask a musician about music (it happens to them more rarely than you might think), they light up. The energetic Dudamel probably doesn't need any more wattage but it is a fascinating and revealing interview.







# Notes & Letters

Exonerating Schwarzkopf • Dame Janet's Strauss • Women conductors

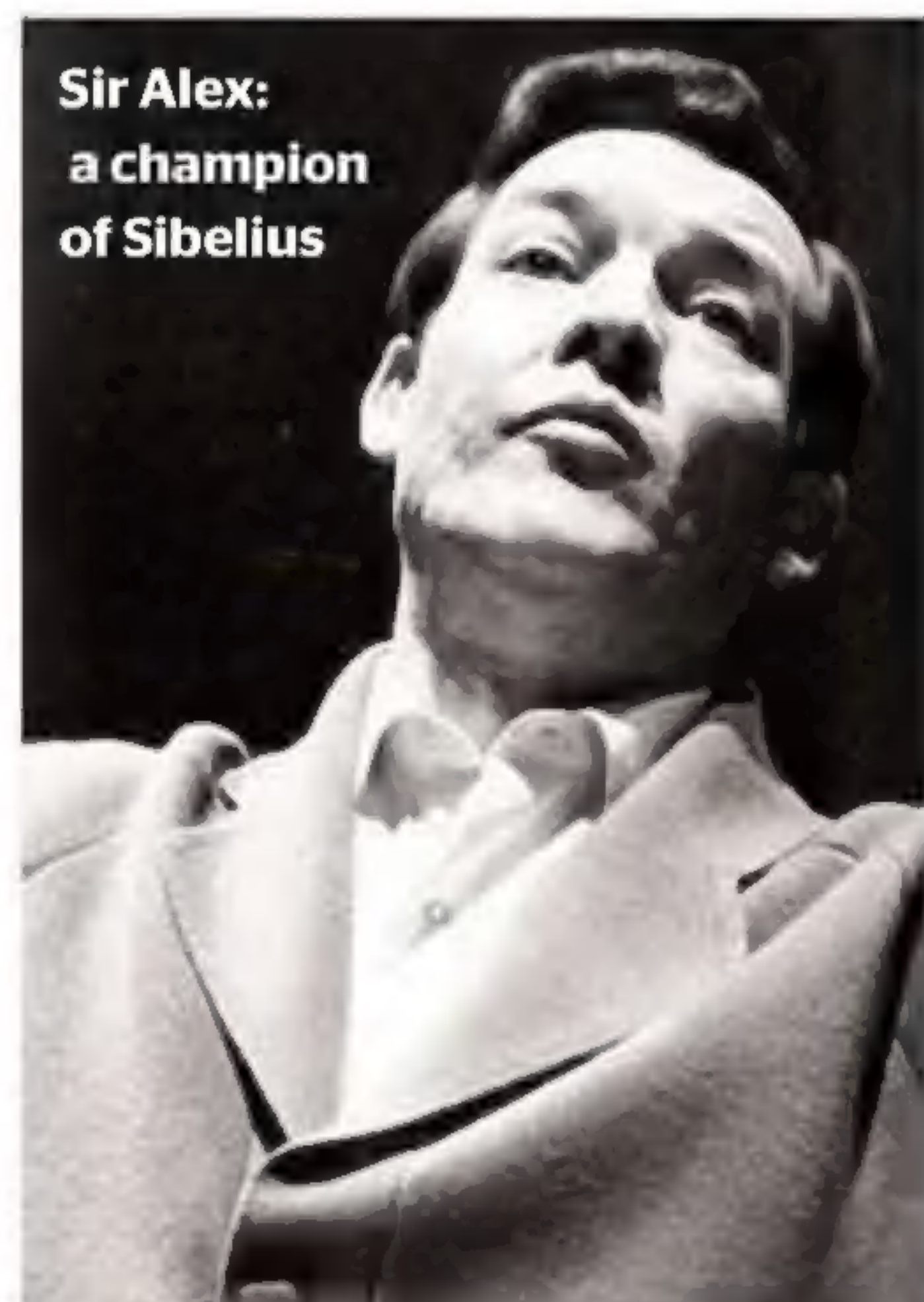
## Scots Sibelius

I'm sure that other readers (especially those from north of the border) will share my disappointment that the late Sir Alexander Gibson did not rate even a mention in the discography for David Gutman's survey of Sibelius's Second Symphony (Collection, July, page 48).

Mr Gutman states two examples of how Sibelius's music was dismissed and patronised by the musical "great and good". Well, not here in Scotland! All through Sir Alex's long career with the Scottish National Orchestra we Scots learnt to appreciate this marvellous music, which he consistently championed. This dedication led to Sir Alex being awarded the Sibelius medal. How many others in Mr Gutman's discography could make that claim?

Robert Roy  
Edinburgh, UK

David Gutman writes: It is a fair point but only because the relevant and pre-emptive passages of my original text were cut for reasons of space: "Aficionados of Abendroth, Abravanel, Ansermet, Celibidache, Gibson, Hannikainen, Kamu, Kletzki, Levine, Mehta, Previn, Sargent,



Sir Alex:  
a champion  
of Sibelius

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### Music and politics

Your book review (*The Schwarzkopf Tapes*, June, page 102) raises yet again the vexed question of how much individual performing musicians are complicit in their country's political dealings. In the case of Germany, where blame has been well and truly aired and where guilt has been apportioned over a protracted period of 65 years, it is high time that we started to evaluate achievement on its own terms without innuendos of a non-artistic nature. After all, we do not do it for the many fine musicians who practised their art in Russia during the Stalinist era, so why continue to pass such judgements on German artists?

Another recent feature implied that Beecham's recording of *Die Zauberflöte* was artistically tainted by the circumstances of its pre-war Berlin recording sessions, which is frankly another naive expression of this same blame culture, sadly so fashionable in the media as a whole these days but quite out of place in a journal of *Gramophone's* reputation. Some years ago a prominent German conductor of the younger generation summed up the ridiculousness of the situation by asking a journalist, "What has C sharp minor got to do with fascism?"  
John Hunt, Wimbledon, London, UK



Schwarzkopf:  
should she be  
judged solely on  
her artistic merits?

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will find it one of the most user-friendly classical music sites on the internet. The letter of the month receives £50 of Presto Classical gift vouchers. Please send letters for publication in the September issue by July 8.

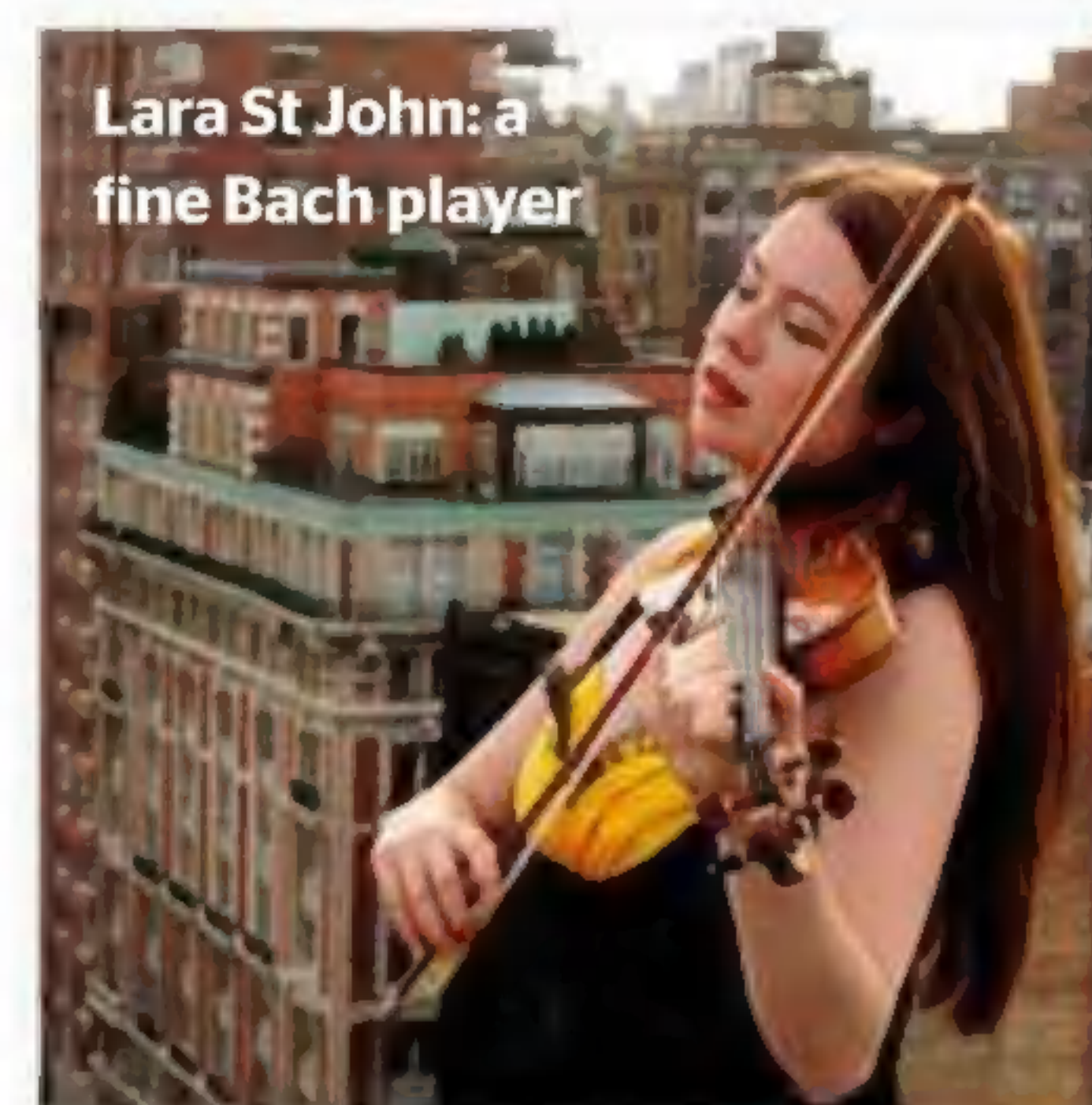
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Schippers, Temirkanov et al will doubtless be outraged by their neglect in these paragraphs. However, with a work as oft-recorded as this it is impossible to sample everything."

Incidentally, Sir Alexander Gibson is not unique in having

received a Sibelius medal for his pains. I think just about every first-rate Finnish musician gets one. According to the internet, Jukka-Pekka Saraste got his in 2007 while Osmo Vänskä, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Leif Segerstam

had theirs in 2005. You get one for writing a book on Sibelius, too.



Lara St John: a  
fine Bach player

## Solo St John

I read with some interest your review of the highest-rated recordings of Bach's six Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin (June, page 46). I feel that Mr Druce left out a significant artist – Lara St John. Lara St John is arguably one of the finest Bach violinists before the public today and I would rate her recording from 2008 (Ancalagon) as top-tier. In any discussion of this music it is a significant oversight to not include this recording.

Peter Thornley  
St Catharines, ON, Canada

Duncan Druce writes: I have to admit that somehow I failed to register Lara St John's recording. With Mr Thornley's recommendation, I shall listen to it with special attention.

## Stickswomen

Thank you for your article "But where are the women?" (June, page 41). I was pretty fed up to see the all-male line-up of "rising young" conductors in *Gramophone*. And I'm not even a music professional. I can imagine there was a lot of eye-rolling among young women conductors.

And, yet again, we have somebody saying that everything



will improve as more women move onwards and upwards, and that the next generation (currently teenagers) will have a completely equal playing field. Wanna bet?

I'm old enough (pushing 60) to have witnessed this kind of thinking applied to a rising generation of women conductors before. Twice over, in fact. I've encountered similar thinking in business and in the legal profession all my working life. My father, CEO of Canada's largest corporation, used to say that change would happen naturally. There were lots of talented young women working their way up in the organisation and it was only a matter of time and numbers, etc. Trouble is, he said it back in the early 1960s, and he was still saying it in the 1990s.

Anne Thackray  
Toronto, Canada

## Inspired Octavian

In describing Dame Janet Baker as "an odd choice for Octavian", David Patrick Stearns (Collection, May, page 68) is less than fair to a great artist whose performance I remember vividly from Scottish Opera's 1971 production of *Der Rosenkavalier*. The Ponto recording, which Mr Stearns passes over so swiftly, is also graced by the rich-toned Marschallin of Helga Dernesch, before those Isoldes and Brünnhildes for Karajan had taken their toll, and the filigree tone of Elizabeth Harwood's spirited Sophie is a delight. But Dame Janet's performance is nothing less than glorious, passionate and ardent as Octavian and, as Mariandel (especially in Act 3), revealing comedic gifts of the highest order, far

funnier than many more noted exponents of the role. That Dame Janet didn't find the character of Octavian of sufficient interest to reprise the role makes this recording all the more treasurable, and the quality of her performance suggests that her casting, far from being odd, was inspired. And the performance is in English!

Charles Stewart  
Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, UK

## Cover points

Horst Scherg (Letters, July) asked for a "positive article" in *Gramophone* devoted to really good LP covers. He is obviously a very modest man. I have in front of me a wonderful book, published by Gestalten, Berlin, in 2008, entitled *Classique: Cover Art for Classical Music* by...Herr Scherg. In over 200 beautifully presented pages the reader will find a veritable feast of LP covers to drool over in a nostalgic reverie. The scholarly annotations (all in English) are fascinating, the production values as high as could be wished for. Leafing through the book is a delight whenever a cover once owned appears – and there are so many of them! – tinged with a little sadness that it was dumped with the rest.

But let us not forget that there is some lovely work being done with CD covers, too – for example, Jordi Savall's issues on Alia Vox or Alexander Melnikov's recent Shostakovich Preludes and Fugues on Harmonia Mundi. Perhaps in 30 years' time, when we can only download our music, we will be reminiscing as fondly about the best of our CD covers.

Michael Browne  
Nottingham, UK

## Editorial notes

In July's Replay (page 98), Rob Cowan mistakenly credited Sir Thomas Beecham with two recordings of Beethoven's Second Symphony rather than three. The LPO and RPO versions are fairly well known, an earlier version with the LSO (the one omitted), rather less so.

## OBITUARY



'Bernie': created  
'the sound of  
burnished gold'

### BERNARD GREENHOUSE Cellist

Born January 3, 1916;  
Died May 13, 2011

The master cellist and beloved teacher, Bernard Greenhouse, has died aged 95. I visited him only recently and found a man still in the centre of life, with students buzzing around him and with his passion for music burning as brightly as ever.

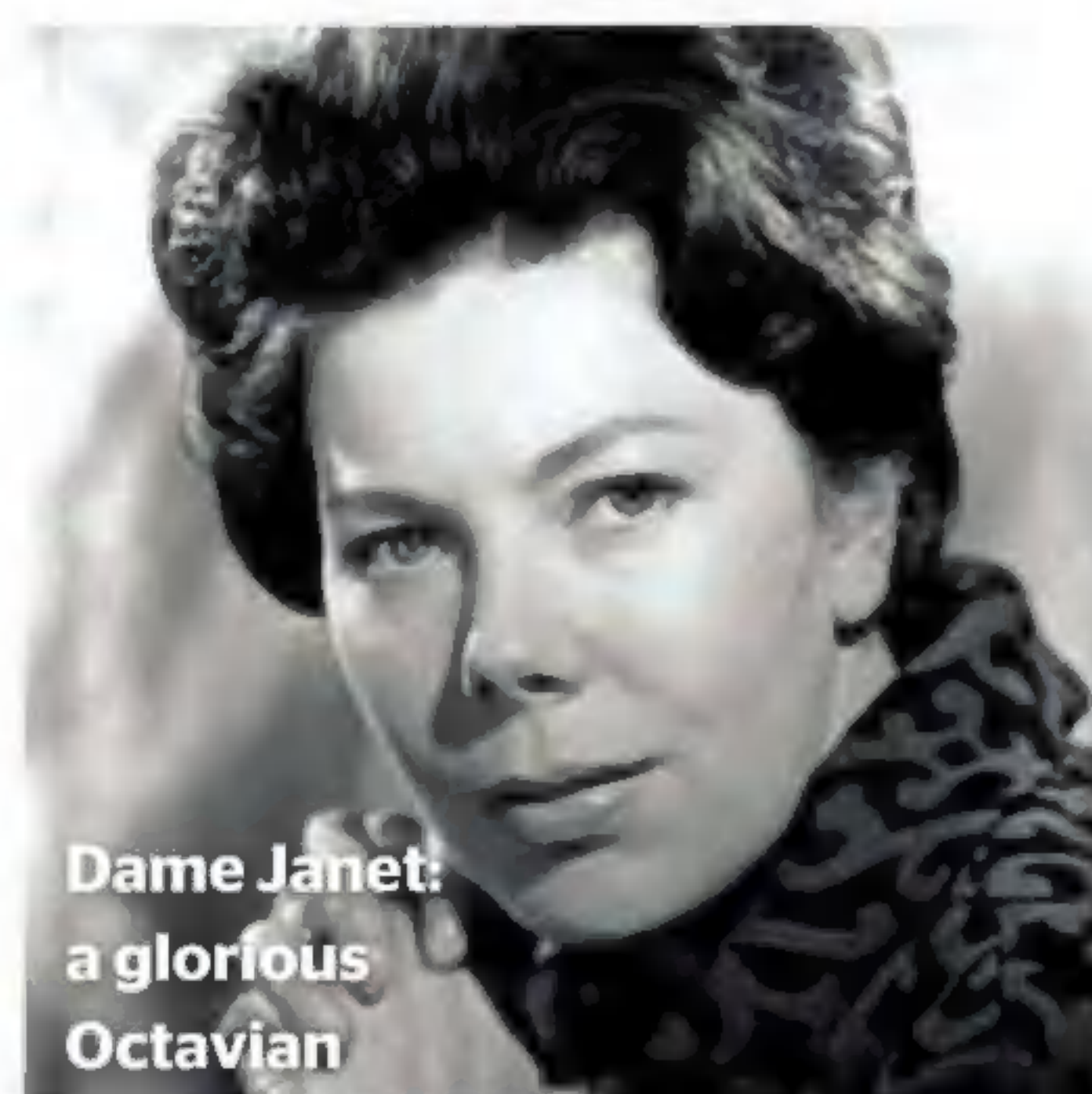
He was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1916, the son of Jewish émigrés from Eastern Europe. At 16 he was accepted as one of only a handful of cellists into the Juilliard to study with Felix Salmond (and later with Emanuel Feuermann and Diran Alexanian). After graduating, he won the solo position at the CBS orchestra, where he began his career. By his own admission, it wasn't until he went to Europe to study with Pablo Casals that he found his true voice as a cellist and began "a lifetime's work" as a musician. Bernard (Bernie to his friends) talked to me often about his three years' "apprenticeship" with Casals in Prades from 1946, how it was musically the most important period of his life and that he wished to pass on all that he had learnt. His principal teaching was to think of music as a language with words, sentences, paragraphs and an overall structure.

Bernie returned to the US in 1949 and joined the Bach Aria group as well as nurturing

the beginning of a solo career. There are a few rare recordings of his playing from this time which prove beyond doubt the flowering of his genius: his unique approach to phrasing, his sound, described by one critic as "the sound of burnished gold", and a generosity of spirit that transmitted directly to an audience. These qualities found full song in his collaboration with violinist Daniel Guillet and pianist Menahem Pressler, with whom he formed the Beaux Arts Trio in 1955.

At that time it was a new concept to have a touring full-time piano trio and it took some gentle persuasion at the beginning to get a manager and concerts. Nevertheless, they quickly established themselves as one of the world's most popular and successful chamber ensembles and held this reputation gloriously for the 32 years that Bernie played with them. The group became the focus of his performing life and together they made benchmark recordings of the core trio repertoire, toured the world and changed the landscape of piano trio performance and recording.

Bernard Greenhouse was one of the truly great cellists of the 20th century. In the words of the Emerson Quartet's David Finckel, he "was largely responsible for elevating the standard of chamber music performance to a whole new level". **Natalie Clein**



Dame Janet:  
a glorious  
Octavian



## OBITUARIES

**GIORGIO TOZZI** Bass  
Born January 8, 1923;  
Died May 30, 2011

With the passing of Cesare Siepi last year, Giorgio Tozzi was perhaps the last of the great bass singers of his era.

Though hardly ubiquitous, he left enough recordings to give a good assessment of his talents. Chief among these is a sovereign Ramfis (*Aida*) under Solti (Decca), a quietly moving Colline (*La*



*bohème*) on the famous Beecham set (EMI) and a Verdi Requiem for Fritz Reiner whose reputation today belies the lukewarm *Gramophone* review it originally received. If it can be found, perhaps his best recording was taken from a live performance, of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* in Salzburg in 1961 (most recently available on the Opera d'Oro label). Under Gavazzeni and alongside Tito Gobbi, Tozzi blazes as the vengeful Fiesco – he and Gobbi arguably outdoing even the partnership of Gobbi and Christoff on the classic Nello Santi studio set.

In one of his most famous roles, he took on vocal duties for the 1958 film of *South Pacific*, as Emile de Becque, the role Pinza had created on Broadway. Musical theatre was never an alien form to Tozzi, who in some ways crowned his career with a Tony Award-winning turn in 1980 with Frank Loesser's *The Most Happy Fella*.

His career ended as a vocal professor, first at the Juilliard School and latterly at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. He published one novel, *The Golem of the Golden West*. **James Inverne**

**DANIEL CATÁN** Composer  
Born April 3, 1949  
Died April 9, 2011

Daniel Catán, whose opera *Il postino* was premiered by Los Angeles Opera in 2010, has died of a heart attack at the age of 62.

Mexican-born Catán read Philosophy at the University of Sussex before studying composition with Milton Babbitt at Princeton. His forthright musical vocabulary at times divided critics but he developed fruitful relationships with the Houston and LA opera companies. He garnered critical acclaim with the 1996 premiere of his opera *Florencia en el Amazonas*, the first opera in Spanish to be commissioned by a major American company, and this led to the commission of *Salsipuedes* for Houston Grand Opera's 50th



anniversary. *Il postino*, starring Plácido Domingo as Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, enjoyed significant attention when it opened Los Angeles Opera's current season. Catán had been at work on his latest opera, *Meet John Doe*, commissioned by the Butler School of Music at the University of Texas and due to be performed in October 2012. **En Khong**

**BRUCE HAYNES** Oboist  
Born April 14, 1942  
Died May 17, 2011

Bruce Haynes was a pioneering practitioner of the Baroque oboe whose last years were devoted to a late-blossoming academic career that bore stimulating and controversial fruits. In the early 1960s he played modern oboe with orchestras in California and Mexico but in 1964 he relocated to The Hague in order to study

Baroque performance with Frans Brüggen and Gustav Leonhardt. He later participated in a number of groundbreaking recordings: he was involved in the Bach cantata series for Teldec directed by Leonhardt and Harnoncourt, and played frequently with the Kuijken brothers.

In the 1980s Haynes settled in Montreal with his wife Susie Napper (a renowned gambist); they were founder members of the San Francisco-based Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. In 1995 his PhD thesis opened a can of worms regarding the



historical evidence about pitch during the Baroque era, which later resulted in the publication of the mischievously titled *A History of Performing Pitch: The Story of A* (2002). Other books published during the past decade include *The Eloquent Oboe: A History of the Hautboy from 1640 to 1760* and *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer's History of Music for the Twenty-First Century*, in which he gleefully played devil's advocate with the period-instrument revolution which he himself had done so much to bring about. Haynes also completed *The Pathetic Musician*, a study of expression in early music that will be published posthumously by Oxford University Press.

**David Vickers**

**DENNIS GODBURN** Bassoonist  
Born February 6, 1949;  
Died May 10, 2011

Dennis Godburn studied bassoon at the Hartt School of Music in his native Connecticut, where he came into contact with lutenist Joseph Iadone, a pioneer in the early music revival. Godburn

was a natural on every woodwind instrument he picked up: recorder, shawm, racket and curtal. Arriving in New York in 1970, he joined a trio called Guido's Other Hand, performing Renaissance music.



Soon he was climbing the ladder of the modern-bassoon world. From 1976 principal bassoonist in the Orchestra of St Luke's, he recorded music new, old and in between, including Copland's *Music for the Theatre*. He premiered André Previn's Trio for piano, oboe and bassoon with the composer in 1996, and recorded *Archaeopteryx* under its composer, Charles Wuorinen.

When period-instrument orchestras arose, Godburn quickly established himself as the leading early bassoonist in New York, also appearing in Boston with the Handel & Haydn Society and in San Francisco with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. In a starry transatlantic venture, he joined with Dutch recorder player Marion Verbruggen and a quartet of English specialists to record chamber concertos by Vivaldi. Godburn's recording of Mozart's Bassoon Concerto, K191 (MusicMasters, 1996), displays persuasive spontaneity, a singing tone on the edge of vibrato and, at the right moments, whispering intimacy. In recent years Godburn relocated to Palo Alto, California, but he managed a bicoastal existence, returning to New York regularly to perform with OSL and with the elite Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. **James Kopp**



COMING NEXT MONTH

# GRAMOPHONE

Menuhin with  
Elgar on the steps  
of Abbey Road



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# SONGBOOK

THE TREBLES OF TWENTHURY ABBEY SCHOOL CANTORUM



Benjamin Nicholas *director*  
Helen Porter *piano*  
Carleton Etherington *organ*  
DCD34097

BBC Chorister of the Year (2009) Laurence Kilsby heads up this fascinating programme of music by Richard Rodney Bennett, Leonard Bernstein, Gabriel Jackson, James MacMillan, Arvo Pärt and Vaughan Williams among others. The boys, from Dean Close Preparatory School in Cheltenham, respond with vital commitment.

**'The trebles splendidly vindicate the tradition that places them at the heart of English cathedral music'**

— *Gramophone*, August 2009

# DELPHIAN



### The Shadow Side

Contemporary Song From Scotland  
Irene Drummond *soprano* Iain Burnside *piano*  
DCD34099

For many years Irene Drummond has been the leading exponent of contemporary song in Scotland. With her partner Iain Burnside — peerless in this music — she offers a fascinating snapshot of her repertoire on this recording. From the rarified sparseness of James MacMillan, to the sustained luminosity of Paul Mealor, and the emotionally charged dramatic outbursts of John McLeod, *The Shadow Side* explores a world of half-lights and visceral intensity.

'Irene Drummond, one of Scotland's most attractive exponents of the contemporary repertoire'  
— *The Scotsman*

'Burnside's delightfully poetic pianism proves irresistible'  
— *Classic FM Magazine*

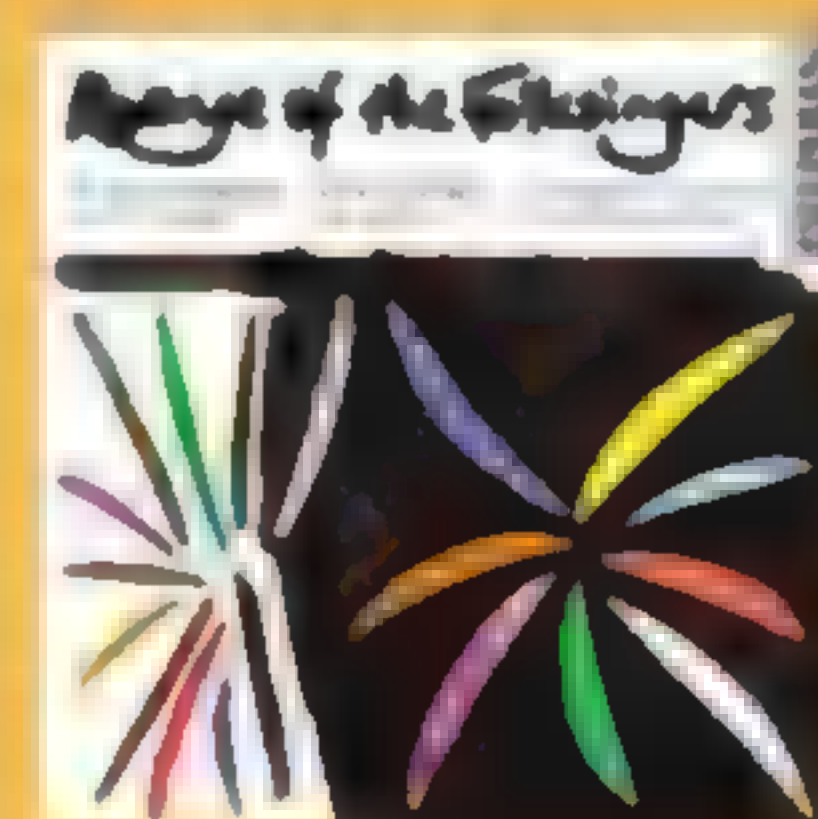


### Rory Boyle — Solo Piano Music / Phaethon's Dancing

James Willshire *piano*, Bartholdy Trio  
DCD34098

This year 2010 British Composer Award winner Rory Boyle celebrates his sixtieth birthday. Young virtuoso pianist James Willshire's debut recording explores the full gamut of Boyle's compositional personality — from the cragginess of his finely wrought Sonata to the intensely human lyricism of Tatty's Dancing (itself a sixtieth birthday present for Boyle's wife).

'While Boyle's Scottish roots are never far away, his music has a strong, mainstream European, Stravinsky-based rigour, with its own brand of virile, challenging, but always comprehensible counterpoint, dissonance which is hard-fought yet never gratuitous, an unsentimental lyricism and unerring sense of architecture.' — Nicholas Cleobury



### Revenge of the Folksingers

Alasdair Roberts, Olivia Chaney, Mairi Campbell, Jim Moray  
Concerto Caledonia, David McGuinness  
DCD34108

Another hallmark collaboration, this album was created by Concerto Caledonia and guests during a week's residency in the Suffolk countryside at Aldeburgh. Traditional and original songs are interspersed with old and new tunes from Scotland, all informed by the group's magpie diversity and by Britten's folksong arrangements, which they found in Aldeburgh's library. The resulting alchemy of nu-folk with an early music sensibility defies categorisation.

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# Editor's Choice

James Inverne's pick of this month's outstanding new discs - hear excerpts online



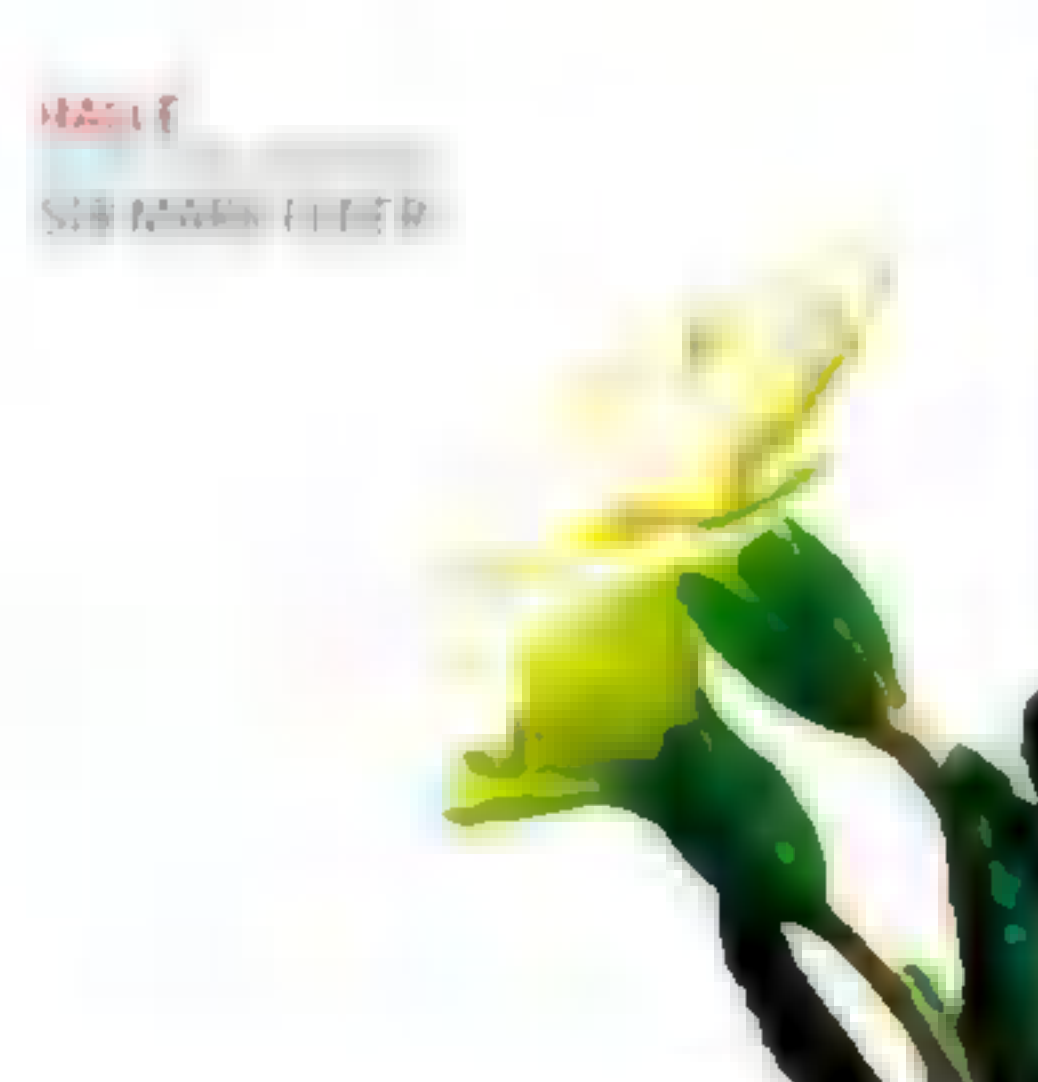
Log on to the Gramophone player to hear extended excerpts from all our Editor's Choice recordings streamed in high-quality audio. Also this month, from the archives there are works (disc below) by the little-known composers Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi and Clément Janequin (the latter one of the most celebrated composers of Renaissance France). They're played by Pro Musica Antiqua conducted by Safford Cape. And you can hear that bristling LSO performance under Josef Krips that takes our Reissue of the Month accolade. Plus a taste of the Gramophone Collection, podcasts and more, all online at [www.gramophone.co.uk](http://www.gramophone.co.uk)

ARCHIVE  
PRODUCTION

The High Renaissance



**CHOPIN**  
Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 2  
**Daniel Barenboim** *pf*  
Berlin Staatskapelle /  
Andris Nelsons  
DG 477 9520GH  
I have to admit to still having the once-in-a-decade Martha Argerich performance of Chopin's First Piano Concerto in my ears (from EMI's recent Lugano Festival set). Barenboim doesn't dispell that, but does provide his familiar, much-loved traits - charisma, imagination, beauty and strength. Both concertos are housed here in big-boned, satisfying performances. Enjoyable.  
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 54**



**'ENGLISH SPRING'**  
Hallé Orchestra /  
Sir Mark Elder  
Hallé CDHLL7528  
Travel where you will, listen to what recordings you may, I suspect you won't find a more engaging, well-played selection of English music than this. The Hallé under Mark Elder are enjoying a golden age, especially for this repertoire, and this might be their finest recording together yet. Bax's *Spring Fire* is the highlight. "Hypnotic," Gramophone's review calls these performances. Hypnotic is the word.  
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 60**

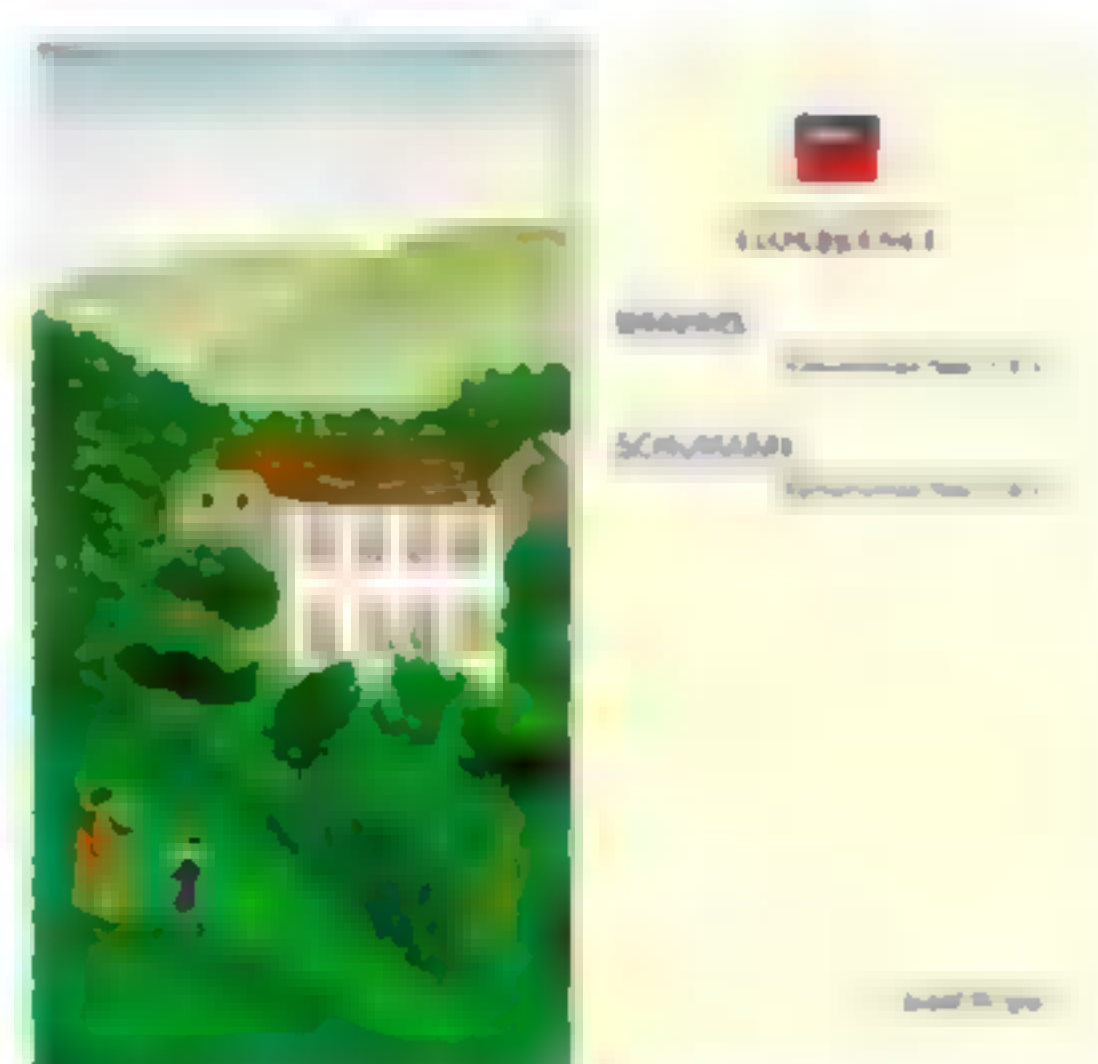


**BEETHOVEN**  
Complete Works for  
Cello and Piano  
David Geringas *vc*  
Ian Fountain *pf*  
Hänssler Classic CD93 272  
A fascinating exploration of Beethoven works that don't often grab the spotlight, this. David Geringas and Ian Fountain offer profoundly thoughtful and in some ways dutiful interpretations (sticking closely to indications in the scores) but find expressive freedoms through that approach. Not as showy as rival versions, this is a poised, considered set.  
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**



**BEETHOVEN**  
Piano Sonatas  
Ingrid Fliter *pf*  
EMI 094573-2  
Nothing that Ingrid Fliter has previously recorded gave notice that she had this in her. Here is a riveting traversal of well-known works. Just listen to the first movement of the *Pathétique* and you'll hear the virtues that pertain throughout - surprising tempi and touch that nevertheless make sense, themes presented as inner voices relating to each other with as much personality as characters in a play. Fascinating stuff.  
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**

## Reissue of the month



**BRAHMS. SCHUMANN**  
Symphonies  
London Symphony  
Orchestra / Josef Krips  
Decca Eloquence 480 4325  
It's incredible how much difference a really top-notch transfer can make. This reissue of

performances from the 1950s reveals, as hasn't been the case beforehand, just how great an orchestra the LSO could be for Josef Krips.

I suspect that these days we tend to underestimate Krips as a conductor, in a way that we don't with, say, Rudolf Kempe, another conductor very active in the UK at the same time. But the refined musician Krips was comes across powerfully here. A valuable set indeed.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 94**

## DVD & Blu-ray of the month



**MOZART**  
Don Giovanni  
Soloists; Orchestra of the  
Age of Enlightenment /  
Vladimir Jurowski  
EMI 072017-9

This Fellini-esque staging by Jonathan Kent was controversial when new last year. I loved it. It emerges all the clearer in the forensic detail that DVD and Blu-ray afford.

Gerald Finley is a Giovanni who cannot stand his own company. He needs victims, accomplices, anything but solitude. Kate Royal is a decent Donna Elvira, but Luca Pisaroni nearly steals Finley's thunder as a brilliant Leporello.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**



‘Mahler’s Second is a potent reminder of Jurowski’s brilliance. On his day he is surely the most interesting conductor of his generation’



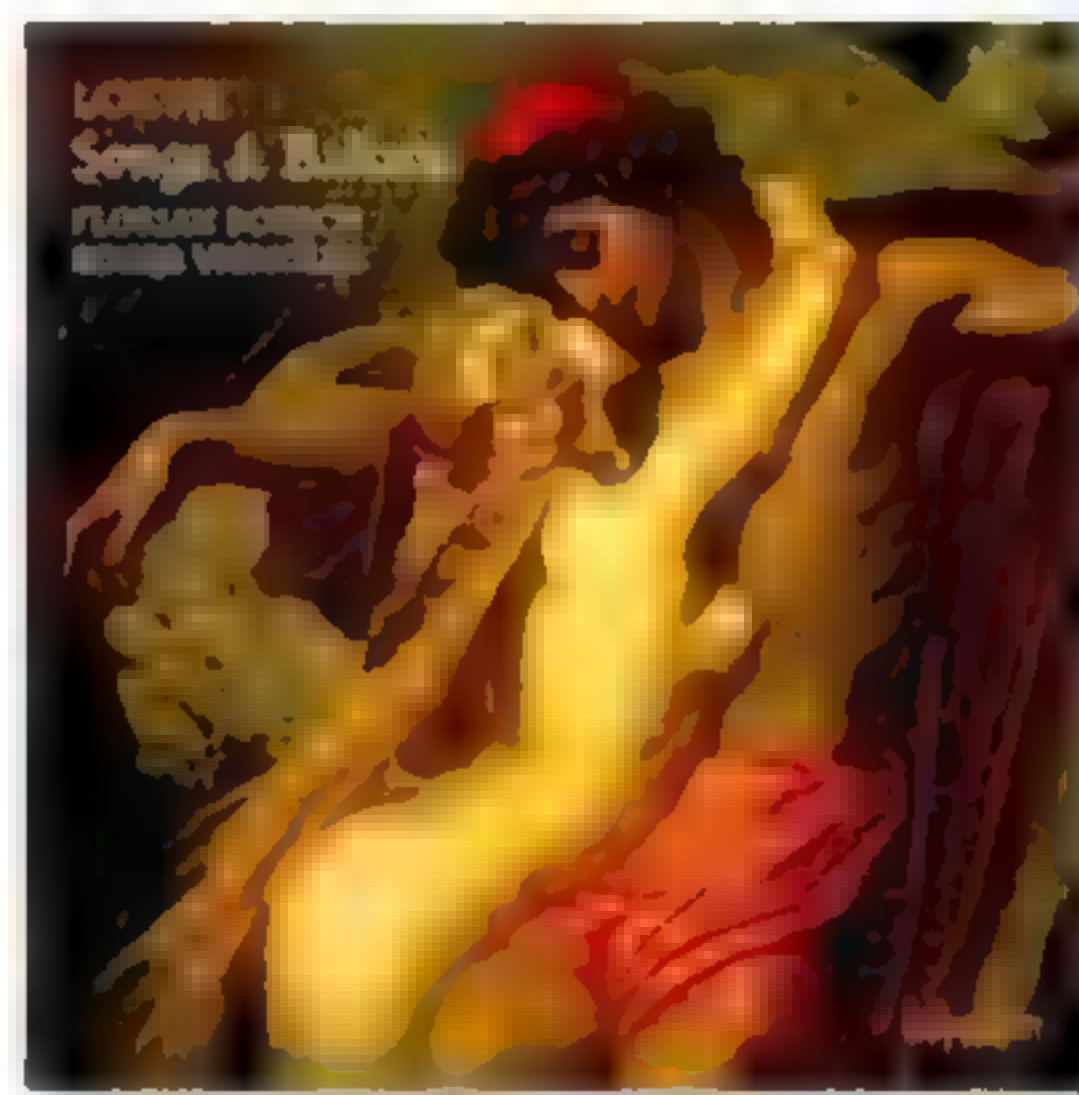
#### LISZT

Harmonies du soir  
Nelson Freire pf  
Decca 478 2728DH  
Anything that Nelson Freire records is worth rushing to buy. This pianist conjures up, seemingly without effort, entire worlds. So it is here, with a wondrous Liszt recital. To pick out any one moment somehow seems wrong with Freire. He doesn’t work like that, he doesn’t think like that. As Jeremy Nicholas’s review says, “He thinks in long paragraphs.” His is an imagination that leaps ahead, while never leaving the listener behind.  
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 72**



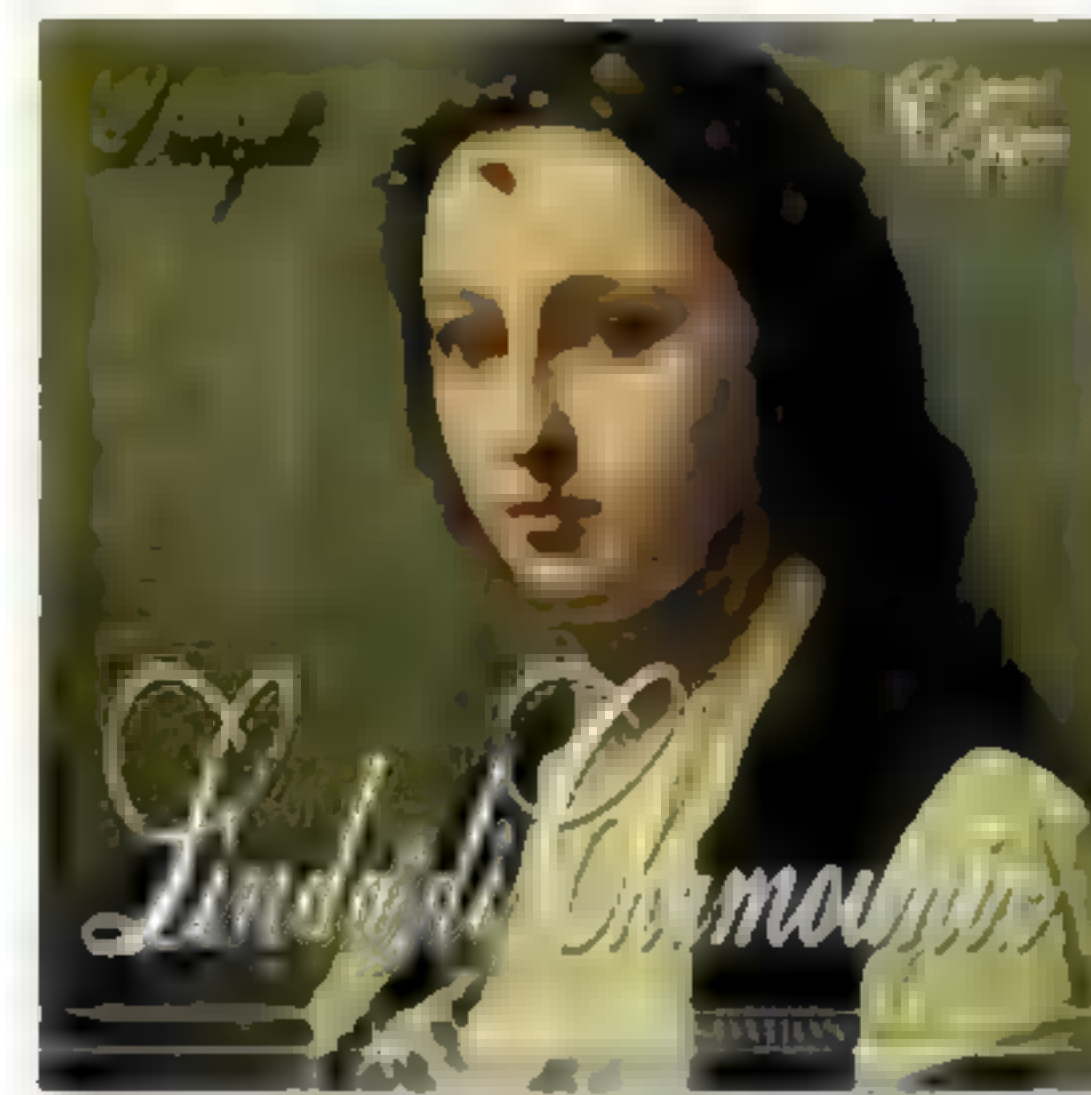
#### DENNEHY

Grá agus Bás.  
That the Night Come  
Dawn Upshaw sop  
Iarla Ó Lionáird smgr  
Crash Ensemble / Alan Pierson  
Nonesuch 7559 27063-2  
This won’t be for everyone but, for those with an ear for something unusual, there are rewards to be mined. There’s something primeval in the chant-like vocalism of Iarla Ó Lionáird, while Dawn Upshaw’s contribution is perhaps more traditional but no less powerful. Who says that there are no new directions in new music?  
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 76**



#### LOEWE

‘Songs and Ballads’  
Florian Boesch bar  
Roger Vignoles pf  
Hyperion CDA67866  
Bad luck for Carl Loewe that he lived at the same time as a talented songwriter called Schubert. And yet Loewe was a big star in his own time, much in demand internationally. One can hear why from this delightful album. Vignoles and Boesch (warm, big-hearted singing) present a composer who, despite lacking Schubert’s genius and complexity, is nevertheless a melodic master. Do have a listen.  
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 78**



#### DONIZETTI

Linda di Chamounix  
Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House / Sir Mark Elder  
Opera Rara OCR43  
A second pick this month for Mark Elder. And if this is anything to go by, his artistic directorship of Opera Rara should be a real treat. He is sure-footed throughout this great, if relatively little-known, work – with a propulsive power that grips to the end. There’s a lot of Donizetti that isn’t really worth excavating, but this is. Now can we have a staged production please?  
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**



#### MARTIN

Der Sturm  
Netherlands Radio Choir and Philharmonic Orchestra / Thierry Fischer  
Hyperion CDA67821/3  
A premiere recording, and an exceptionally fine one at that, for the “other” opera of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. No idea why it isn’t better known, as it is a fascinating work: dramatic, beautiful and musically adventurous. Thierry Fischer makes this first complete set count, with a wonderful cast including Robert Holl, James Gilchrist and Simon O’Neill.  
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 88**

### Recording of the month



#### MAHLER

Symphony No 2  
London Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra / Vladimir Jurowski  
LPO LPO0054  
When Vladimir Jurowski first began to blaze upon the musical scene with performances for Welsh National Opera and others, everyone fell over themselves to hail this most exciting young conductor. Glyndebourne and the London Philharmonic both snapped him up. And perhaps he started being rather taken for granted.

This astounding recording of Mahler’s not exactly under-recorded Second Symphony (although, unfashionably perhaps, it remains my favourite Mahler) is a potent reminder of Jurowski’s brilliance. On his day he is surely the most interesting conductor of his generation.

Our reviewer, Edward Seckerson, has no hesitation in hailing this as the modern Mahler Second of choice, even beating out Iván Fischer’s fine achievement for Channel Classics. What strikes me

first and foremost is the all-permeating sense of sadness in this reading.

Yes, it’s plenty exciting where it needs to be, but the miracle moments for me are the almost unbearable hush as the mezzo makes her first, sombre entrance or the almost mock jollity of the klezmer strings elsewhere.

I’d always thought the finale a cosmic celebration. Here it feels more like a great coming-to-terms with what is inevitable. In its way, amazing.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 57**



# SOUNDBITES

Gallery View p16 » Interview p19 » Diary p21 » One to Watch p23 » Richard Eyre p25 » Philip Kennicott p26 » The Trial p28 » Biography of an Instrument p30 » Quiz p31



**Bell of St Martin's:**  
the violinist is the  
new music director  
of the ASMF

## Bell named new music director of the ASMF

**T**he Academy of St Martin in the Fields has scored a coup in naming Joshua Bell as the orchestra's new music director. Bell, who won a 1998 *Gramophone* Award for his recording of the Barber and Walton Violin Concertos and Bloch's *Baal Shem*, is one of the world's most sought-after violinists.

The ASMF was founded in 1958 by Sir Neville Marriner. He subsequently made it a world-famous ensemble with a vast number of recordings; at one point, the ASMF was among the most recorded ensembles in the world. Although more recent artistic directors Iona Brown and Kenneth Sillito have retained musical standards and the appointment in 2000 of

Murray Perahia as principal guest conductor brought in another world-class musician, Bell's arrival will signify to some a return to the high-profile glory days.

Unlike other soloists who have second lives as conductors away from their instruments, such as fellow violinists Nikolaj Znaider and Thomas Zehetmair, Bell will direct from the violin. Sillito remains in his post as artistic director, with Bell taking lead responsibility for musical direction. No recordings are planned to include the orchestra with Bell, but Bell is a regular recording artist for Sony Classical and his first big concert project with the Academy will be the complete Beethoven symphonies which, an orchestra spokesperson says, "they would all be eager to record".

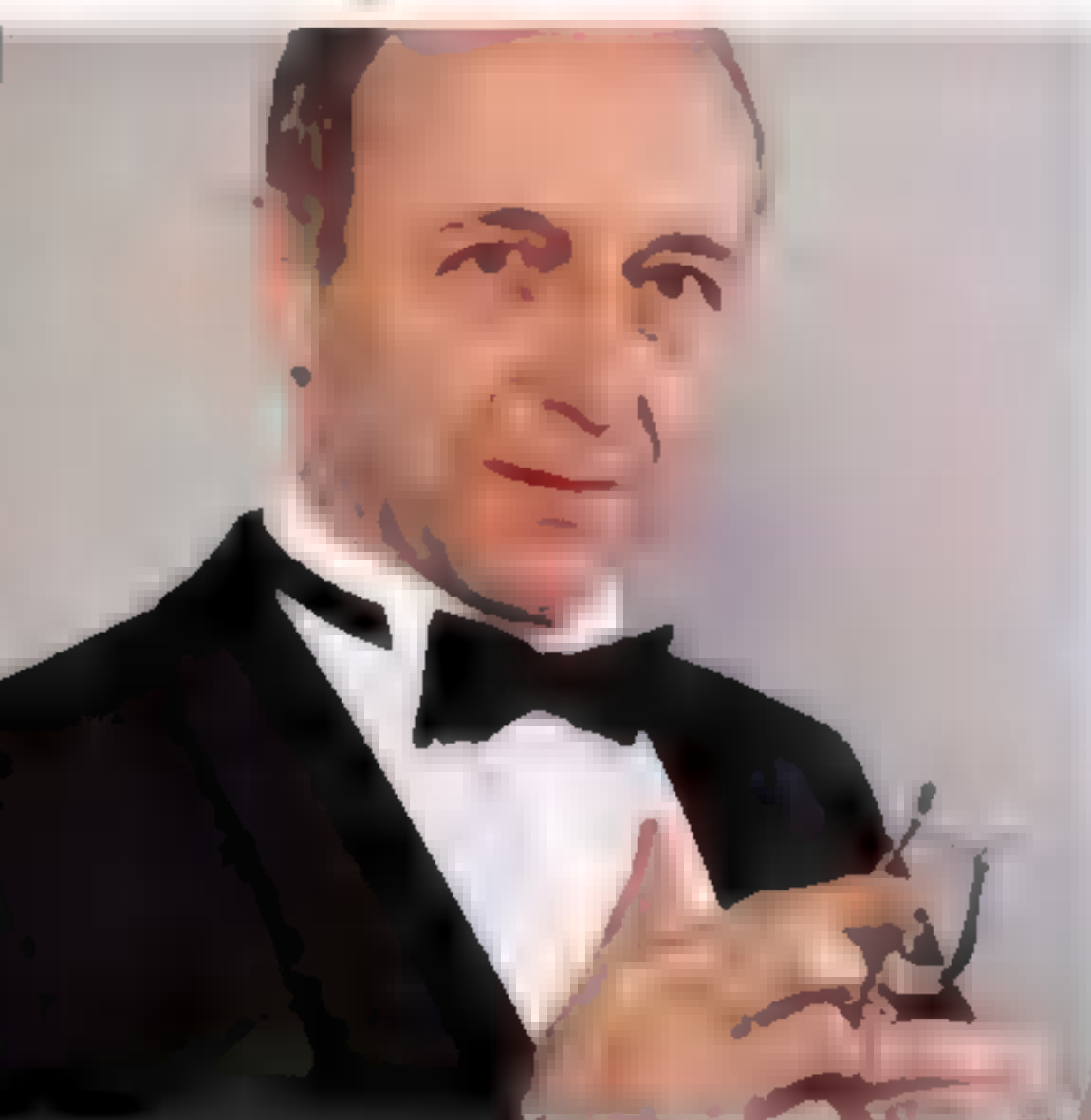
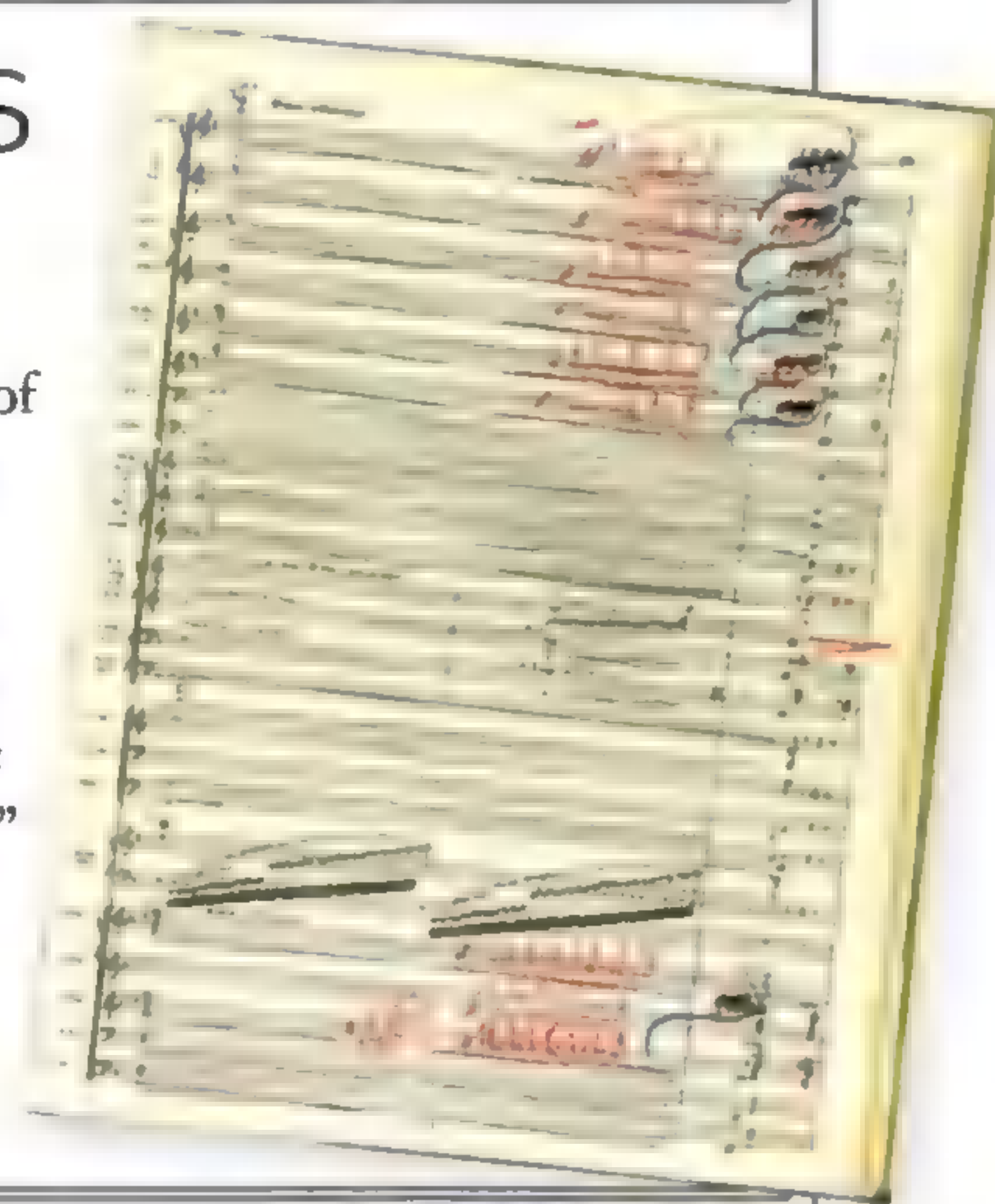
## Mahler's Third Symphony sold at Sotheby's

**M**ahler's personal copy of his Third Symphony has sold at Sotheby's, London, for £163,250. The auction, held on June 8, was the first occasion that the newly discovered first edition manuscript, formerly part of a private collection, had been placed on the market.

The full 1902 score, published shortly after the work's first complete performance, features extensive alterations by the composer in red ink, and in brown and blue crayon. The amendments are made directly on to the staves and in the margins, and appear on over 60 per cent of the work's pages. The corrections were made as Mahler directed the first few performances of

the work and constitute his entire revision of the symphony's orchestration.

Also auctioned, on June 7, this time by Bonhams of London, was a score fragment by Verdi, containing the composer's autograph. Though just two bars long, the extract was sold for £2400 to an American buyer. Dated June 1862, the musical fragment bears a resemblance to the Rataplan Chorus from *La forza del destino*. "It is possible that this is from that opera," said Simon Roberts of Bonhams, "perhaps an early draft of the chorus, but we don't know to whom it was given. It might actually be a message about the Risorgimento."



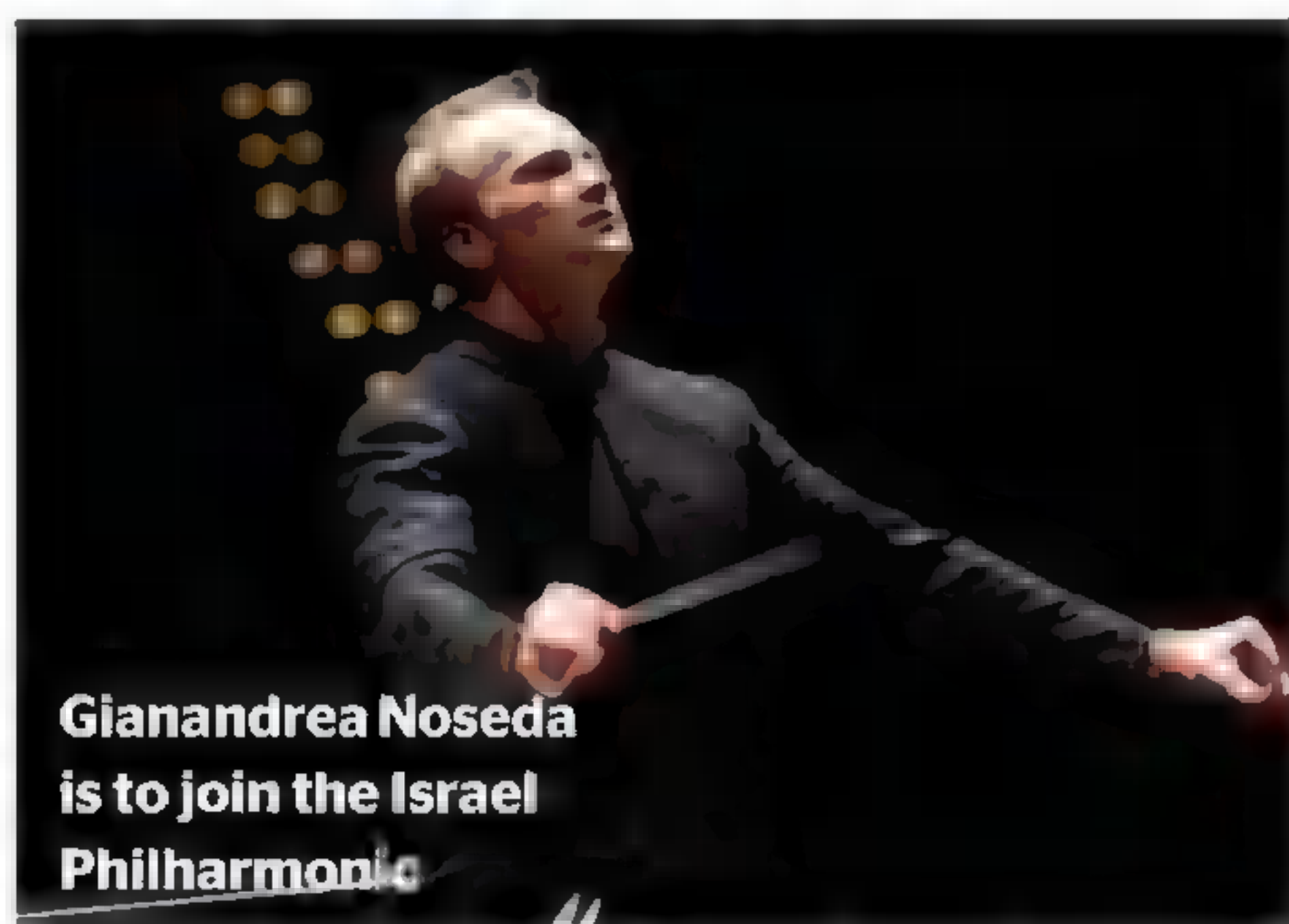
This year's Royal Philharmonic Society Awards for live music included honours for pianist Leon Fleisher in the Instrumentalist category for his performances at the 2010 Aldeburgh Festival, and for **Iván Fischer** in the Conductor category for his Beethoven series with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.



Olympic champion **Jonathan Edwards** was at the Royal Opera House to announce its temporary exhibition dedicated to the Olympics during London's staging of the Games. *The Olympic Journey: The Story of the Games*, from July 27 to August 12, 2012, will feature medals from every Olympics since 1896.



## Israel Philharmonic recruits Nosedá



Gianandrea Nosedá is to join the Israel Philharmonic

The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra has appointed a new chief guest conductor, Gianandrea Nosedá, in its 75th anniversary year. The Italian came to attention when he held the same position for the Mariinsky Theatre in the late 1990s, as a protégé of Valery Gergiev. These days Nosedá's status is rather higher. Having recently stepped down as chief conductor of the BBC Philharmonic, he still runs the Teatro Regio di Torino and continues to add to his fine discography for the Chandos label.

Nosedá, who conducted the Philharmonic at the beginning of May for a clutch of concerts featuring violinist Joshua Bell and pianist Bishara Haroni, will conduct the orchestra every season. However, his next scheduled appearance with them is not until January 2012, with a series of concerts including a rarely performed Clementi symphony, restored and completed by Alfredo Casella. He joins the IPO at a time when its music director, Zubin Mehta, is celebrating 50 years of conducting the orchestra.

## GRAMOPHONE TALKS TO...

### Ingrid Fliter

The Argentine pianist on tackling Beethoven's sonatas

#### How long have you been playing Beethoven?

Beethoven has been a big love of mine all my life. He is a composer who has influenced me deeply since my first steps as a performer because I always feel this strong sense of will in his music, the struggle to overcome difficulty. As a child, you cannot understand this logically, of course, but you can still feel this force inside of him. When you begin to observe his music in a more analytical way, you discover the power of nature that is burning inside every phrase he composed. Nothing is left to coincidence; everything is felt deeply in his being. Before Beethoven, music was considered mostly entertainment, but with Beethoven, music became a human matter – it became a possibility to express the human soul.

#### Why record these particular sonatas?

I felt there was a connection between them, a chain of pathos that builds from the very first signs of tragedy in the *Pathétique* – this is the moment he first faces darkness in his life – going through the *Tempest*, which he wrote at a time when he was even considering suicide, to the stormy struggle of the *Appassionata* and its victorious and heroic finale.

#### Donald Tovey believed the *Appassionata* maintained tragic solemnity throughout.

I feel more victory in the final coda than



doom. You can almost hear a rock band playing, see the instruments smoking! I definitely feel there is an impressive darkness, but there is still this lively attitude towards an objective to win. He's not a victim.

#### What is the *Appassionata* like to play?

You can't go on stage and present it as if it were just another piece. You must be mentally and physically strong. I feel overwhelmed of being in charge of such a duty. It's like carrying a flag for the human race.

**Fliter's Beethoven is reviewed on page 69**

## TAKING NOTE

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY...

### New York Times

Soprano Anna Netrebko and tenor Joseph Calleja dropped out "at the last minute" from the Metropolitan Opera's June tour to Japan over radiation concerns. Tenor Jonas Kaufmann had already pulled

out from the tour following Japan's March earthquake and tsunami. "The majority of the company is happy to be here," said Met general manager Peter Gelb. "Stars are stars. They're different from company members. Netrebko and Calleja, they were genuinely upset they had to make these decisions."

[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

### The Independent

Not one but two biopics about Antonio Vivaldi will begin filming this year. "Movie industry insiders are talking about the prospect of 'duelling violins' at the box office and the welcome return of the classical music biographical genre, the best-known example of which is *Amadeus*." The first project,

starring Max Irons, will focus on the composer's "work with the orphans of the Ospedale della Pietà" and the second will chart "the musician-priest's inner battles to preserve his vows of celibacy".

[www.independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk)



JoAnn Falletta has been named by the Ulster Orchestra as its new principal conductor. The first woman, and the first American, to hold the post with the ensemble, Falletta begins her three-year appointment with the start of the 2011-12 season. The conductor is also music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic and Virginia Symphony orchestras.



London Mayor Boris Johnson has pledged £2m to boost music education for children in the city by March 2012. The Mayor of London's Fund for Young Musicians will provide music scholarships for 400 children, and will also give around 10,000 children up to the age of 18 the opportunity to work alongside professional musicians.





## GALLERY VIEW



## Portrait of an artist

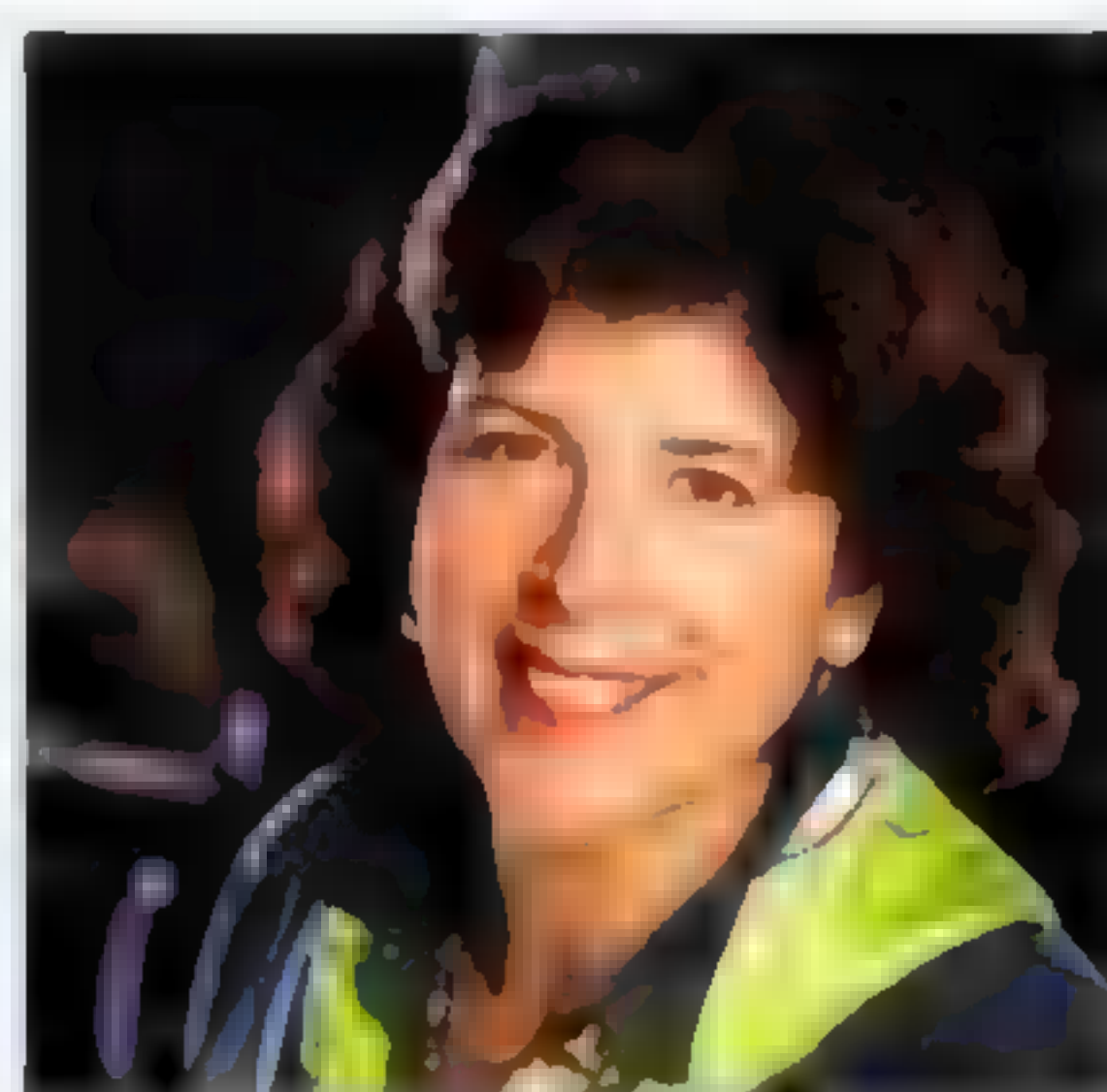
The partnership between the Sydney Symphony and principal conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy is a happy one by all accounts. Not only have the orchestra cemented their association with the pianist and conductor with a contract extension to the end of 2013, but their alliance has now been celebrated in a portrait by Australian artist Ralph Heimans. The painter first approached the conductor to sit for him a year ago. "I'm passionate about

classical music and have always been a huge fan of Vladimir Ashkenazy's work," he said. "His leadership of the SSO represents an enormous contribution to the Australian cultural scene and it struck me that it would be wonderful to depict him within the iconic architecture of the Opera House." The result is a warm, yet highly structured work, reflecting Ashkenazy's "generosity of spirit" and "humility", in addition to his powers of intellect. In the words of the

artist, "It shows Mr Ashkenazy in a vortex of architectural movement that resembles the insides of a musical instrument...and is a reflection of the energy of this great musician." The work joins a long list of musician portraits, from instantly recognisable renderings of Bach, Handel and Beethoven, to bronze busts of Sir Georg Solti in Grant Park, Chicago and of Sir Henry Wood, overlooking the Proms each season at the Royal Albert Hall.



**Lang Lang** can now add an Honorary Doctorate Degree from London's Royal College of Music to his list of accolades. The piano star received the award from HRH The Prince of Wales in recognition of his "outstanding achievements". Composer James MacMillan and conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen also received Honorary Doctorate Degrees.



Opera director **Francesca Zambello** is to succeed Plácido Domingo as artistic advisor to Washington National Opera. The Spanish tenor announced he was stepping down last September after 15 years with the company. Zambello recently directed a new production of Wagner's *Ring* cycle for San Francisco Opera.



## The Specialist Classical Chart

The UK's best-selling pure classical releases



Compiled in association with the BPI  
by The Official Charts Company

- 1 (1) **Miloš - The Guitar**  
Miloš Karadaglić DG
- 2 (2) **Forever Vienna**  
André Rieu Decca
- 3 (Re) **Light and Gold**  
Eric Whitacre Decca
- 4 (9) **Italian Concertos**  
Alison Balsom EMI
- 5 (6) **Voices - Chant from Avignon**  
Benedictine Nuns of Notre Dame Decca
- 6 (New) **Vaughan Williams - Garden of Proserpine** Bournemouth SO Albion
- 7 (New) **Liszt - Harmonies du Soir**  
Nelson Freire Decca
- 8 (New) **Casella - Symphony No 3**  
Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma Naxos
- 9 (4) **Striggio - Mass in 40 Parts**  
I Fagiolini / Robert Hollingworth Decca
- 10 (New) **Respighi - Violin Concerto in A**  
Marzadori; Chamber Orch of NY Naxos



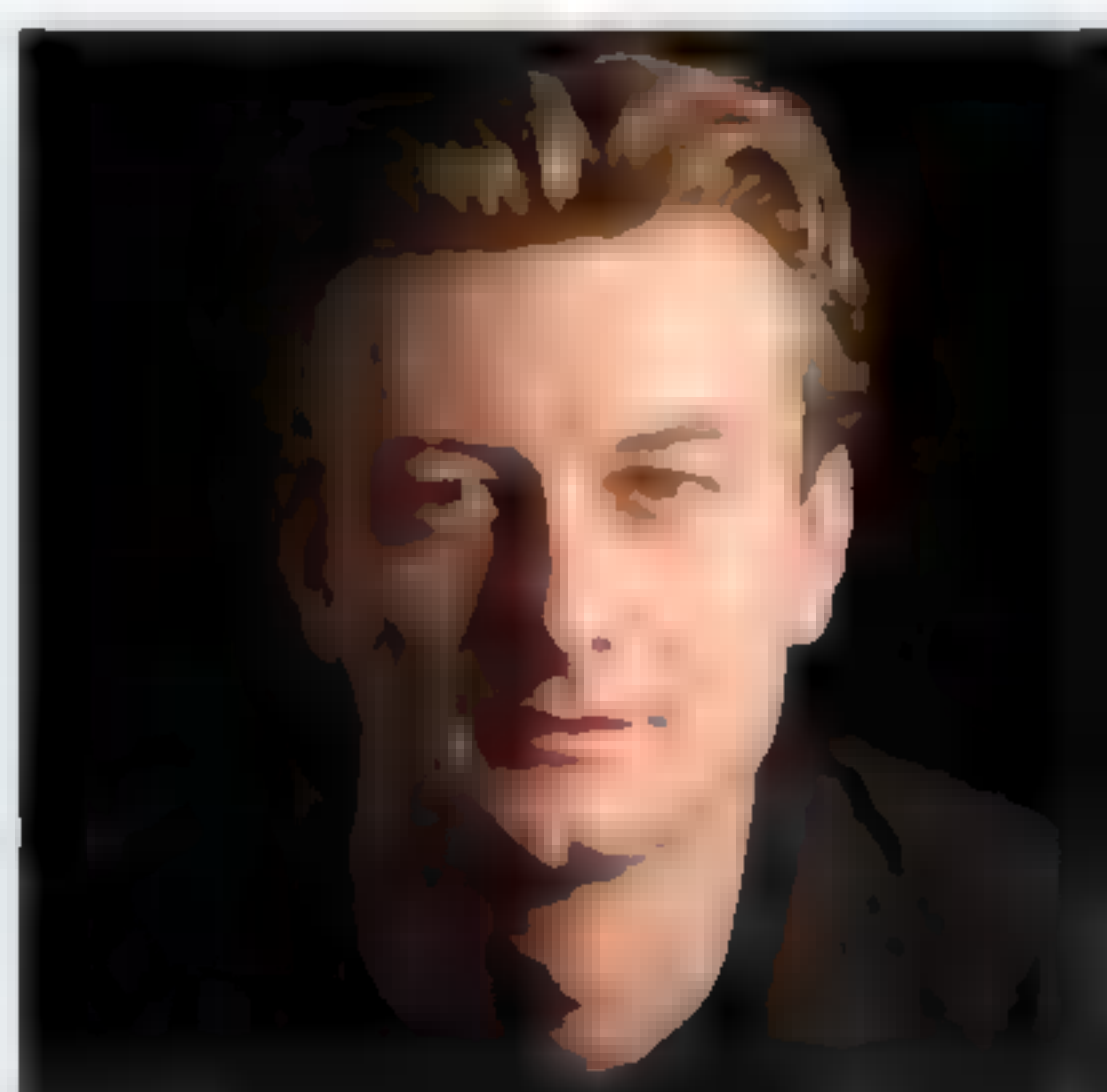
Nelson Freire  
enters the chart  
with Liszt

Chart for week ending June 4, 2011  
(previous week's position in brackets).

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**Christian Arming**, the young Austrian conductor, has been appointed music director of the Liège Royal Philharmonic from September 2011 for a four-year term. His appointment follows the abrupt departure of François-Xavier Roth in April 2010. Currently music director of the New Japan Philharmonic, Arming will conduct 10 programmes per season from 2012-13.



**Nicholas Collon** has been appointed the London Philharmonic assistant conductor for 2011-12. He will assist Vladimir Jurowski in Royal Festival Hall concerts and conduct several performances throughout the season. Collon is artistic director of the Aurora Orchestra, which won the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Best Ensemble this year.



## GRAMOPHONE TALKS TO...

# Sir Mark Elder

Opera Rara's new artistic director on the new job and a rare Donizetti recording

### Artistic directorship of a label is an unusual concept - what are your plans for it?

Opera Rara always existed to do live performances as well as recordings, and both are vital. My interest in this repertoire is very long and deep; it has fascinated me for 30 or 40 years. I'm interested in the style of these predominately 19th-century Italian (but also French) operas, what makes them "zing".

We all know that there is nothing nearer purgatory than being in the middle of a long row during a bad performance of a Donizetti opera! The style of this era is vulnerable and it depends on the passion of the singers and the players and the conductor to bring it to life. I'm interested in the secret of how to do that.

### How "rara" is Opera Rara going to be now? With fewer operas being recorded, do some works that were once not infrequently performed now qualify as rare?

We can be slightly less recherché - I'd like to do a very famous opera, but with period instruments and unexpected voices. But it all depends what you mean. Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix*, the opera we've just issued, has been done. Edita Gruberova and Mariella Devia have both recorded it. Both were a long time ago, and I think it has always been viewed as "rara". Yet it is a major, inspired



score. Written to impress the Viennese, Donizetti really pulled out all the stops.

### He felt that the woman-goes-mad-then-recovers story was a bit hackneyed.

And yet he managed to break new ground. Everything else about the piece is unexpected - its ambience high in the Swiss Alps, a deep sense of community, the dangers of aristocracy. And all the characters in this community have personality and range - it's like a sort of Alpine *The Archers*! Donizetti's genius flowered with increasing intensity, and *Linda* belongs to his glorious end period.

**Linda di Chamounix is reviewed on page 87**

## Sony signs David Greilsammer

Pianist and conductor David Greilsammer has signed an exclusive recording agreement with Sony Classical. His first disc, due for release in early 2012, will feature a selection of solo Baroque and contemporary works. The Israeli-born musician is keen to transcend traditional classical barriers, and his concert programmes

frequently combine Renaissance and early Baroque works with the avant-garde. "The world is changing and it is our responsibility as artists to change with it and take risks," he said upon signing the Sony deal.

Greilsammer is director of both the Geneva Chamber Orchestra and Suedama Ensemble in New York.



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## A CONVERSATION WITH...



# Nicholas Angelich

The pianist talks Bach, Brahms and balancing life with work over a post-Wigmore recital lunch with **Geoffrey Norris**

**I**t's Easter Monday and Nicholas Angelich has just given an absorbing lunchtime recital of Bach/Busoni, Brahms and Schumann at the Wigmore Hall. Oxford Street is heaving with Bank Holiday masochists, but the restaurant I propose for a late lunch is nicely tucked away and tranquil. We chat about the hot news of the moment – the forthcoming Royal Wedding – but soon it's down to music and in particular Angelich's new recording of the *Goldberg Variations* on Virgin Classics. "Bach," he says as we order, "is very important in every musician's life." Something as serious and knotty as the *Goldberg Variations* certainly seems natural territory for a pianist such as Angelich, who thinks deeply about the interpreter's responsibility towards a composer. He is animated in conversation and throughout our lunch I prompt him not to let his food get cold.

But on the platform he maintains a manner that might well be described as subdued. "There's no reason to be ostentatious or to show your personality," he says. "The music communicates it. If you try to put yourself first, then this is something that is not right." As to the question of penetrating to the heart of the music, "the composer wrote many things in the score, which you have to look at, digest and come back to again and again. Playing the text is not something cold or impersonal: it's an extremely rich experience that inspires us and will give different things to different people."

Angelich has earned particular acclaim for his performances of the works of Brahms, a composer, he says, whose "imagination and inspiration and the way of writing music are very special. It was a big project that Virgin started doing and, of course, it's a huge stimulation

when somebody wants you to work on something like that." Brahms, Beethoven, Schumann and Liszt are at the core of Angelich's repertoire. "I also like very much the music of the 20th century and Russian music – Rachmaninov and Prokofiev. But that's a whole different world. The problem that is sometimes very frustrating is that you cannot do everything at the same time." Angelich tries "to have something of a logic" in his schedule but, in the helter-skelter world of the international artist, he exudes uncommon calm, abjuring modern conveniences such as the mobile phone and email. We have reached the dessert stage

and he realises that his plane back to Paris takes off in an hour.

"It's all right," he says with utter unconcern. "I'll get another one."

Working on the *Goldberg Variations*, however, entailed a "long, long process" of thought and of consulting different editions and facsimiles. "With these kinds of things," Angelich says, "it's never really over. You get to a certain point and then you come back to it a little bit later, keep playing it and it grows." As to making a recording, "I've found over the years that it's very important not to listen to it all the time. You have to let it go and, once you've worked on it a lot, you have to get some kind of balance in your outlook. There has to be a natural, spontaneous quality. Bach's music can be played in so many different ways. It's a question of choice and taste as to how you adapt it to a modern instrument, but the music itself is universal." We saunter back to his hotel, his plane already having taken off, and I rejoin the scrum of Oxford Street realising that I have just met an artist who seems to have found the ideal equilibrium in coping with the demands of a performer's life. ■

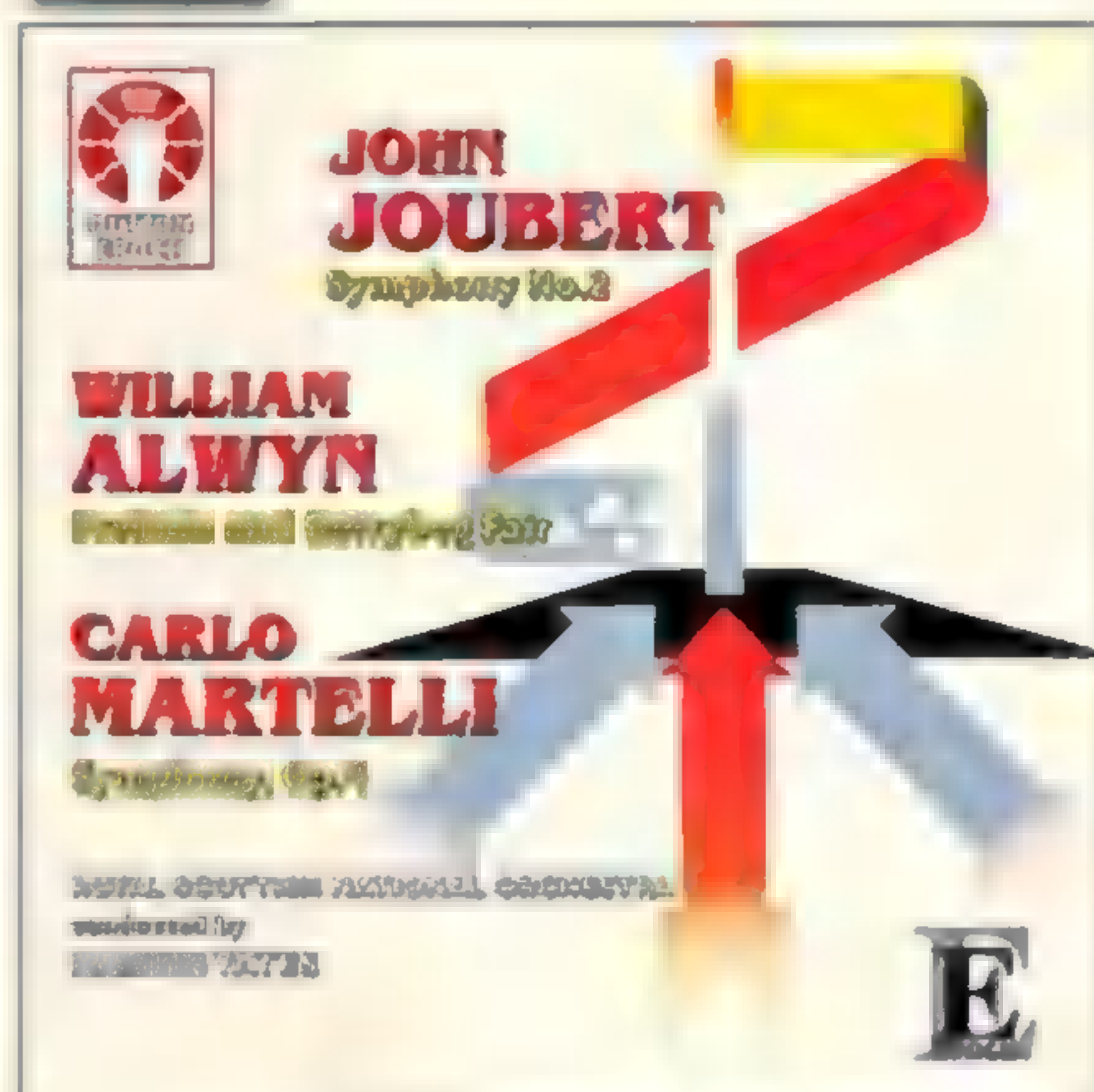
*Angelich's recording of the Goldberg Variations is reviewed on page 68*





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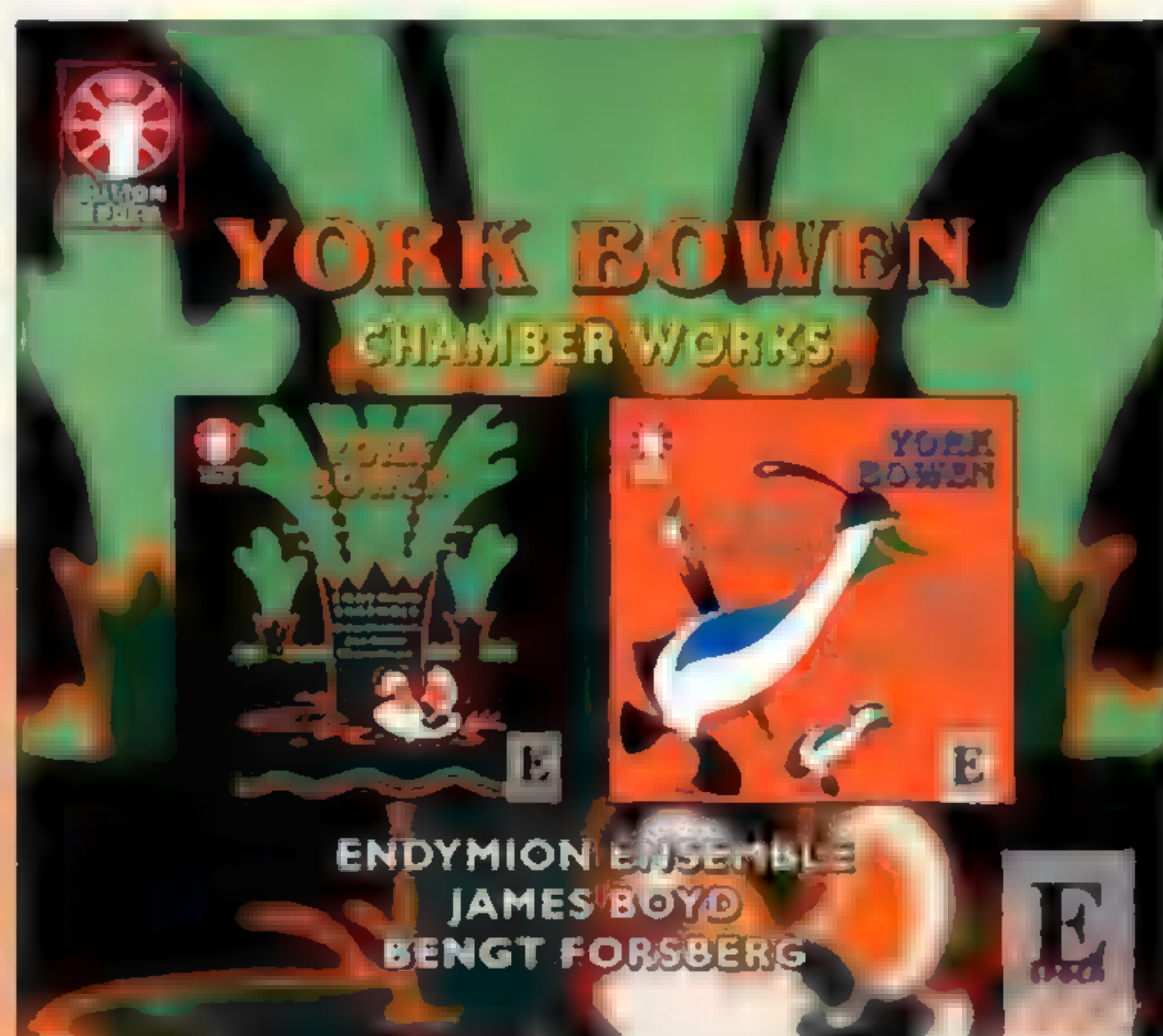
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# Alban Gerhardt

The cellist is irritated by musicians who copy their heroes, then wonders whether he does the very same thing

**H**ow do we acquire language? By listening, not to some audio tapes, but originally to our parents, copying the ones who care for us, later our teachers, friends, yet in the meantime developing our own voice. In school we learn grammar, learn to express ourselves more eloquently by being introduced to literature, slowly coming up with our own thoughts and style of writing in order to leave behind the rudimentary level of child's talk.

## How do we acquire music?

Often enough by learning an instrument. Big mistake! We shouldn't try to learn how to write and read before speaking, and if the instrument has to be introduced at such a young age that the child doesn't have a chance to listen to music and develop a taste and feel for it beforehand, at least it should happen simultaneously. But most of the time children learn their instruments and develop a mastery of them without having acquired the language of music by listening to as much as possible: chamber music, vocal music, opera, church music, big orchestral works, different solo instruments, on CD or, even better, in concert. And this shouldn't come as pressure but I'd expect that, for anybody who thinks of him- or herself as a musician, this is a necessity.

**How else do you expect to come up with your own musical thoughts later on?** Today more



*'Am I a copy or the original?  
Well, it ain't black or white'*


than ever there is the danger of copying, not only from the greats on LP as in "the old days" (my childhood) but from a wide range of CDs as well as the extensive library of YouTube. Even some well-known instrumentalists and conductors today appear to have "studied" and subsequently copied too many idols (even visually through the means of the internet), leading to a lack of originality and authenticity in interpretation. Subtlety and finesse are passé; performers, if they want to be successful, go for the obvious, the big gesture. They underline a musical expression with facial mimicry or, even worse, they replace musical content with gimmicks. Sadly, audience and even critics tend to fall easily for it.

**In Germany a bunch of critics** were invited to judge five pianists playing the same movement of a Beethoven sonata behind the glass walls of a studio; only one of the listeners realised that the pianists were all just doing "playback" to the same recording. All the other critics judged them entirely on their exterior expressions, obviously not being able to listen. I am not complaining about real charisma and a great stage presence, except when it covers up the lack of some deeper musical quality...

**Interestingly enough I am** writing about copying idols at a time when my own latest CD has just been released – a disc called "Casals Encores" and, yes, the great Spanish cellist Pablo Casals

was my own first idol. I bought every single LP of his that I could get my hands on and for a long time I wanted to emulate his unique sound. I loved his intensity, articulation and "interpretative" intonation. My teacher Boris Pergamenschikow tried hard during my studies with him (1989-92) to teach me a more modern and generous way of playing the cello. But I still cherish the memory of playing Beethoven's C major Cello Sonata for Norbert Brainin (leader of the Amadeus Quartet) in 1990, and being told that I reminded him of another idol of mine, Emanuel Feuermann. I obviously couldn't and still can't play like Feuermann (maybe in my dreams), but I think that Brainin must have been referring more generally to my rather old-fashioned way of playing.

**For this new disc I had the** idea of listening through Casals's five encore discs and choosing those pieces I liked best for the recording, as a homage to the cellist who first inspired me. I certainly don't try to imitate Casals but I do follow his approach when playing pieces of this kind – treating them with the same care, intelligence, love and sensitivity as one would a newly discovered piece by Beethoven.

**So, am I a copy or the original?** Well, it ain't black or white but at least I am very well aware of the dangers of not being authentic...   
*Alban Gerhardt's 'Casals Encores' (Hyperion) is reviewed next month*



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## ONE TO WATCH

# David Soar

Attention-grabbing British bass has a career that's on the rise

**W**hen Welsh National Opera's triumphant production of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* visited the

Royal Albert Hall for a semi-staged Prom last year, a somewhat under-par performance yielded at least one revelatory moment.

On came a Nightwatchman many of us had never heard of, and out rolled a bass voice of grave splendour. Amid a cast that included such distinctive lower-voiced talents as Bryn Terfel, Christopher Purves and Brindley Sherratt, for this one voice to stand out was quite some achievement.

Judging from the wave of excitement among the audience that those few utterances created, David Soar has many achievements ahead of him. The 35-year-old Nottinghamshire-born singer studied organ alongside singing at the Royal Academy of Music and made an early living as a freelance organist and conductor.

Yet the singing took precedence when he joined WNO's chorus, from which he has graduated to become an associate artist with the company. His breakthrough year was 2008, with good roles for WNO including Mozart's Figaro and first performances for Sir Charles Mackerras and, soon afterwards, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Richard Egarr.

Now the Met beckons, as does *The Fairy Queen* at Glyndebourne next summer. First, though, his debut recital recording, for the online label Resonus Classics. The August release includes songs by Armstrong Gibbs, Frederick Keel, Mozart and Schubert. 🎧

**Name** David Soar

**Age** 35

**Plans** To record a recital

for Resonus Classics

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# Richard Eyre

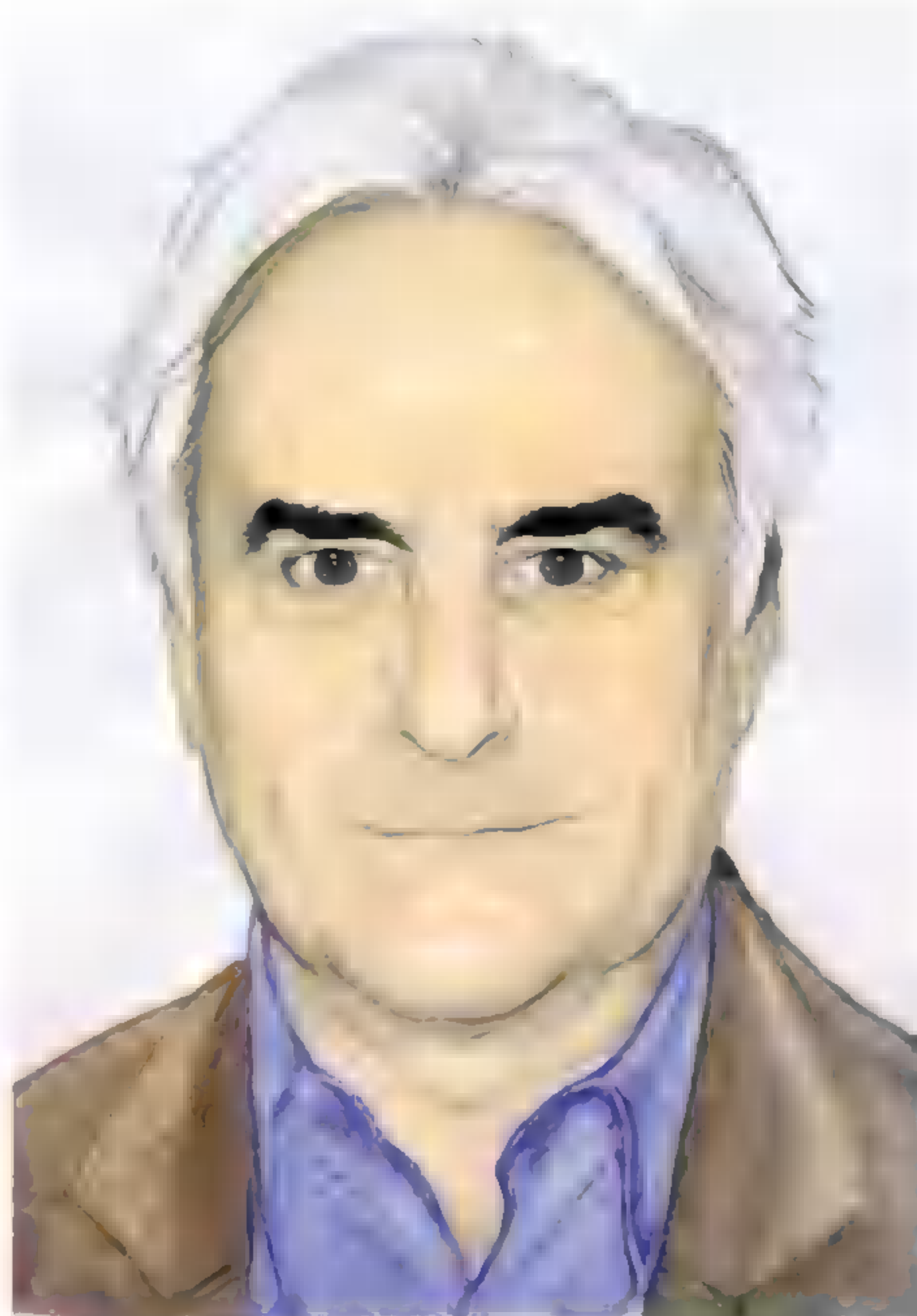
On the trials and tribulations of composers of film music

A composer friend of mine was writing a score recently for a TV series made by a prestigious US channel. There were four producers, none of whom could agree on the music. It was either too fast or too slow, not romantic enough or too romantic, not accessible enough or too “poppy”. They needed more here, less there, warmer, cooler. “I’m standing over the stove with four sous-chefs telling me what to put into the cooking pot,” he said.

Perhaps the preparation of food is too earthy a metaphor for the process of making a film score. It more closely resembles cosmetic surgery. Here’s the process. A composer is chosen by the director in consultation with the producer. At best he or she is appointed before the film begins shooting; at worst the film is edited to quite an advanced form and the composer is appointed by the producer in collusion with the studio, with the intention of fashioning the existing film into a more accessible and marketable commodity.

Generally the first the composer sees of the film is a “rough cut” and, following that screening, the director, editor and composer discuss the musical idiom and “spot” the cues – ie decide where the music needs to start and finish. Almost invariably the editor will have laid up a “temp” (temporary) score of a style that the director and editor feel is appropriate for the film. It will be a ragout of fragments of existing film scores, popular music, classical music, jazz, or anything that comes to hand that fits the mood. And here’s the problem: by this stage of the editing process the director, editor, producers and studio will have become attached to the temp score and will require the composer to imitate or emulate it. The result will often be a pastiche of the temp score, which may in turn be a pastiche of another temp score, which is likely to be a pastiche of an assortment of 20th-century composers – Strauss, Mahler, Ravel, Delius, Barber, Glass, Pärt and so on.

Occasionally directors become so infatuated with the temp score that they reject the music written by the film’s composer. Alex North wrote a score for Kubrick’s *2001*, not a note of which appeared in the finished film. Instead there was Strauss (Johann), Strauss (Richard) and Ligeti. Kubrick used classical music in many of his films inventively and mischievously – Beethoven, Rossini and Purcell in *A Clockwork Orange*, Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart, Schubert and Handel in *Barry Lyndon* – but he never fell into the trap of using classical music to provide specious seriousness and sanction bad art. The most egregious example



‘It can be thrilling to watch a film with no music – just dialogue and sound effects’

of this is Oliver Stone’s *Platoon*, a callow film brimful of sententious rubbish about the first casualty of war being innocence and about finding meaning in the lives of American servicemen while the lives – and deaths – of the Vietnamese are ignored. This meretricious farrago is accompanied by the plangent repetition of Barber’s *Adagio* for strings.

Most films are like 19th-century theatrical melodramas, which were emotionally heightened stories, often thrillers, in which all the action was accompanied by music that indicated to the audience where to feel sad, happy or anxious, and momentum was provided by what Dickens called “hurry” music. There was no great respect shown for

the composer of this incidental music: “The music man at the theatre,” said Bernard Shaw brutally, “seldom counts for more than a useful collage of the gas man.”

In film, however, the incidental music sometimes buoys up a film that would sink without it, as Maurice Jarre’s

score does for *Doctor Zhivago*. The marvel of film music is that, for all the often brutish background to its commissioning and application, there are many marvellously orchestrated film scores that still feel fresh – Max Steiner’s score for *Gone With the Wind*, Bernard Herrmann’s scores for *Citizen Kane* and *Vertigo*, Elmer Bernstein’s score for *The Magnificent Seven*, Leonard Bernstein’s for *On the Waterfront*, Nina Rota’s scores for Fellini and the *Godfather* films, Ennio Morricone’s for *One Upon a Time in the West*, and many contemporary composers who brilliantly blend existing popular music with mood-enhancing sounds, and others who combine the vocabulary of electric music with instruments like ouds, marimbas, tablas and duduks to create an atmospheric and rhythmically inventive fusion.

It can be thrilling to watch a film with no music – just dialogue and sound effects. Lars von Trier’s *Breaking the Waves* is such a film and watching it is like being invited to listen to nature itself. The corollary of that experience is to watch a silent film with a live accompaniment. For the showing of Abel Gance’s film *Napoleon*, Carl Davis compiled a score of music contemporaneous with Napoleon – Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert – stitched in with his original music and some that Honegger wrote for the first screening in 1927. Having all dialogue and effects rendered into music, played by a symphony orchestra and conducted by Davis, created a monumental effect. It was a synthesis of sound and image that would have made Wagner a happy man. ●



# Philip Kennicott

On why Saturdays are never complete without an afternoon radio broadcast from the Met

I don't believe in "appointment television" but I still practise the anachronistic habit of "appointment radio". It's a popular and pretentious term, appointment, meant to distinguish broadcast programmes one cares enough about to put on the calendar from what has become current practice – listening to radio through services that allow you to pick and choose your music, like borrowing books from the library. For most people in this world of media saturation, the idea of actually setting aside time to enjoy a particular show is so quaint as to be charming in a retro sort of way.

For me, it's the Saturday afternoon broadcast by New York's Metropolitan Opera. I've been faithful to the series since I was in college and there's some vestigial voice in my head that reminds me, when it grows around to 1pm on a Saturday, that I really should turn on the radio. At least a couple of times a month while the opera is in session, I schedule weekly errands or mindless work around the house in order to be near the radio and catch up on what they're singing in New York.

It obviously has nothing to do with any vital need for more opera. One could easily swim in a sea of opera, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, if one so chose. In the old days, of course, the Met broadcast was an oasis for the opera-starved but now one tunes in more like the devotee of a soap opera than a rural aesthete hungry for the weekly fix. It's a reflexive habit, a bit of grim curiosity and a craving to remain connected to tradition.

I wasn't quite sure what to do, then, when a tranche of recordings documenting earlier Met broadcasts arrived. The series is part of the Metropolitan Opera's relationship with Sony Classical, which has already brought reissues of broadcasts from the 1940s (Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* with Bidú Sayão and Jussi Björling), 1950s (Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Lily Pons and Giuseppe Di Stefano) and 1960s (Puccini's *Tosca* with Leontyne Price and Franco Corelli). The new crop of four operas takes off from there, with broadcasts archived from 1960 (Beethoven's *Fidelio* with Birgit Nilsson and Jon Vickers) to 1972 (Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* with James King and Theo Adam).

I listen to live recordings mostly for archival interest and focused curiosity about a particular singer or conductor. I don't often put them on and listen straight through. There's a reason God invented studio recording and it has a lot to do with heavy-footed choristers, bellowing prompters, clumsy stagehands, groaning stage mechanics and asthmatic audiences.

And, as much as I love the Met's regular broadcast, I'm not a fan of their engineering – or the way their engineering sounds on my radio. There are maddening



**'I adore Netrebko in the opera house but rarely on the broadcast'**

distortions of volume, soft passages pumped up so high that when the dynamic changes to *mezzo-forte* you feel like you're being blasted out of the room. A recent broadcast of Strauss's *Capriccio* made the opening Sextet sound like an excerpt from the noisiest pages of *Ein Heldenleben*. There are also singers who simply never sound lovely through the Met's microphones. Into that category, all too often, I would have to place Anna Netrebko, whom I almost always adore in the opera house but rarely on the broadcast.

The four new Met issues, however, all greatly transcend the inherent flaws of live recording. More than that. There is spectacular singing on every disc. I heard James King live, but late in his career, as part of a legendary cast (with Jessye Norman and Kathleen Battle) in Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*. It was not a pretty voice at that point; but what a tremendous instrument, what pliancy and Italianate fluidity he brings to Walther in the 1972 *Meistersinger*. I remember Leonie Rysanek, also from late in her career, when she was a master of the best old haridans (Kostelnička in 1993 and Klytemnästra in 1994). But she's also a ravishing, gutsy and young Sieglinde in this 1968 *Walküre*.

But it's not just that great singing trumps distraction and bad acoustics. Perversely, I'm rather fond of the audience noise and interaction, even of the chorus, which has often been one of the Met's weakest links. I love hearing unknown people laughing at the antics of Cesare Siepi and Roberta Peters as the lovers in Mozart's *Figaro*. I feel a strange affection for the orchestra, not so technically brilliant as it is now but beautifully led by Thomas Schippers in the Wagner overture.

The dates of these recordings, for me, fall just before and after my own birth, that generational blind spot in most people's personal history. There's something hypnotically fascinating about this period, before I could have listened with any discernment but filled with legendary names who were either just retired or tending to exhaustion when I started attending the opera in the 1980s. It's like looking at an old family photo album and remembering the obvious: our parents were once as vital as we are now.

That's part of the explanation for why the Met remains appointment radio. For many of us, it's family and you'll forgive family almost anything. The house that nurtured us remains ever fascinating. What I wouldn't tolerate in a live recording from Vienna, or even London, I'll accept happily in these broadcasts. It's comfort food, like overcooked burgers and oversweet potato salad at a Fourth of July picnic. You can find better eats, to be sure, but life wouldn't be the same without them. ☺



James King as Wallner in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*





# Disc of the Month

## Bacewicz, Vol. 2

The music of Grażyna Bacewicz bridges the gap between the neo-romanticism of Szymanowski and the modernism of Lutosławski. The stylistically diverse and technically brilliant Violin Concertos Nos 2, 4, and 5 are performed by Joanna Kurkowicz, accompanied by the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Łukasz Borowicz. Volume 1 (CHAN 10533) featuring Violin Concertos Nos 1, 3, and 7 won a number of awards worldwide, and placed No. 6 on Amazon's list of Top 25 Best Classical Albums of 2009.

CHAN 10673

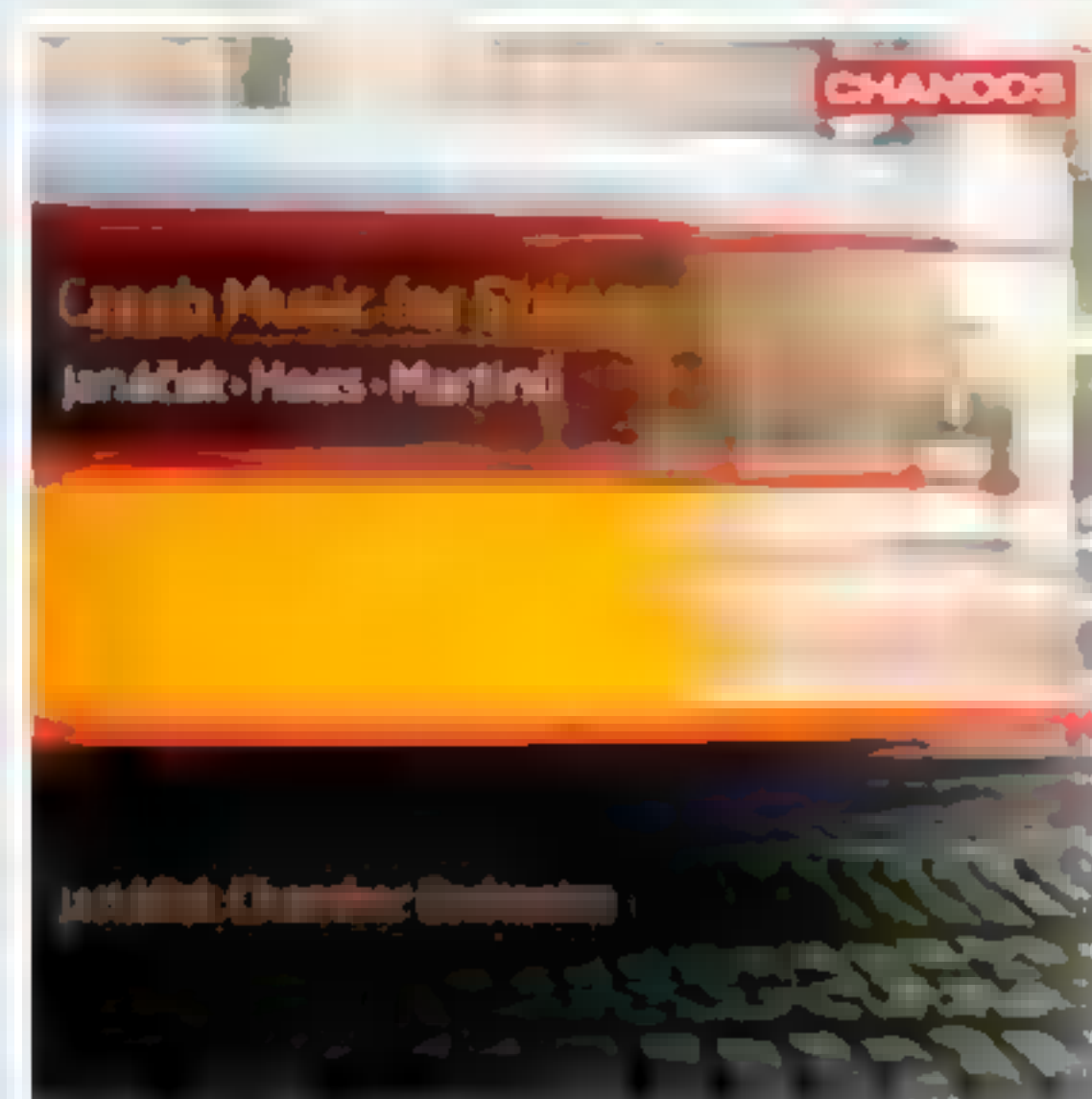
# CHANDOS New Releases



## Rachmaninoff

This is the sixth volume in Chandos' Rachmaninoff series, performed by the BBC Philharmonic under Gianandrea Noseda. It includes the Third Symphony, the symphonic poem *Prince Rostislav*, one of Rachmaninoff's earliest surviving compositions for orchestra, and *Caprice bohémien*, a colourful fantasy on gypsy themes, inspired by the composer's earlier opera, *Aleko*.

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This disc presents music for strings by the Czech composers Leoš Janáček, Bohuslav Martinů, and Pavel Haas, all of whom were prominent figures in their country's musical history during the early twentieth century. The works are performed by the Janáček Chamber Orchestra, which has won awards for its interpretations of Czech music.

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This 5-CD box set is the most comprehensive survey of this composer's works available. It comprises Glière's three symphonies and a host of rarely heard tone poems, ballet suites, and other orchestral works. The set is dedicated to the late Sir Edward Downes, who conducted the BBC Philharmonic on the first four discs.

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## Mozart: Duo Sonatas, Vol. 4

Catherine Mackintosh and Geoffrey Govier formed Duo Amadè specifically to perform the charming and intimate works for keyboard and violin by Mozart, often incorporating readings from his family letters in their concert programmes. Both artists play instruments true to the period, which brings a lightness and freshness to these works, entirely in keeping with the spirit in which they were written.

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# THE TRIAL

Iconic recordings reassessed

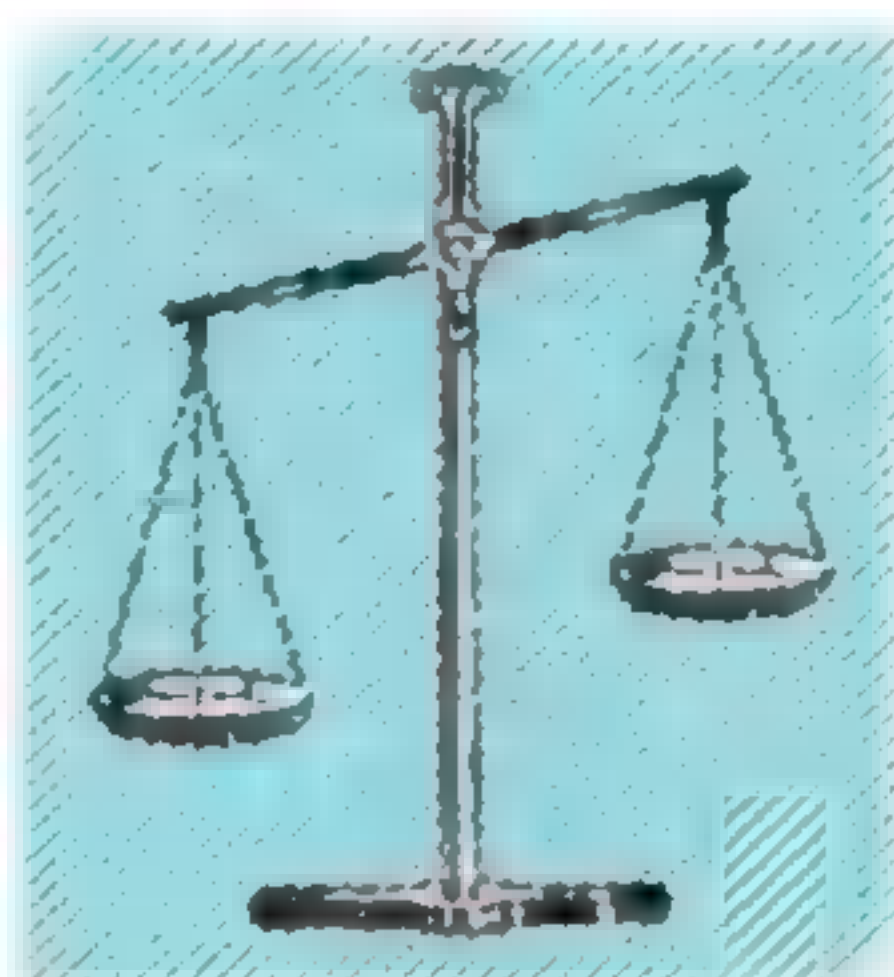


**On trial** this month, Gershwin's **Rhapsody in Blue** – the 1959 Bernstein recording that has divided fans of both composer and conductor

## PROSECUTION: JEREMY NICHOLAS

'Bernstein clearly thinks he knows better than Gershwin and that this much-loved work could only benefit from his improvements'

### *The case against*



Members of the jury, you have heard the evidence – all 16 minutes and 23 seconds of it – and it is now time to consider your verdict. In summing up, the prosecution cannot resist paraphrasing Mark Anthony: "Lend me your ears. I come to bury Bernstein, not to praise him." Lend me your ears, members of

the jury. Undoubtedly, each one of you will have come away with a different impression after listening to this 1959 recording. To those unfamiliar with this particular work by Mr Gershwin, it is more than possible that you will have nothing but praise for Mr Bernstein's piano-playing and conducting. Others, who may know it from rival versions, may yet remain unaware of the various excisions, changes and additions which Mr Bernstein has made to the score and, more to the point, not care.

In using the symphonic arrangement by Mr F Grofé, we admit that it is not Mr Bernstein's fault that the original character of Mr Gershwin's piece has been completely subverted. Many others have used this version, though not all of them have over-indulged themselves to quite the same extent in the big E major theme. It is also true that elements of the recording work well – the brass and woodwind soloists in particular – though the banjo player might as well have stayed home (he is more audible on Mr Bernstein's 1982 recording).

The main thrust of the prosecution case is the number of alterations made to the score and for these alone Mr Bernstein should be found guilty under the Trade Descriptions Act, to wit: at fig 14 (5'40") after the fermata, there is a cut of 39 bars to the four bars before fig 19; at bar 214 (7'05") the piano's quavers are changed to dotted quavers/semiquavers, an aberration which is repeated on subsequent repeats of this theme; immediately after

this episode, extra bars (with a trill and *glissando*) are added; three bars later a further 21 bars are inexplicably cut, jumping to the piano solo before the cadenza; at fig 25, the score says *a tempo*: the defendant interprets this to mean slow and slinky (why?) while once again distorting the correct rhythmic values of the notes, before lurching off *presto agitato* (bar 276) despite the reiterated *a tempo* instruction; at fig 39 an unwritten *glissando* introduces the apotheosis of the second theme which, inevitably, is "swung" again by repeating the dotted quaver/semiquaver rewrite – so very 1950s, so not 1920s.

You may wonder whether Mr Bernstein thought much of the piece. "It's not a composition at all," he wrote of *Rhapsody in Blue* in 1955. "It's a string of separate paragraphs stuck together – with a thin paste of flour and water." The prosecution says that on the contrary, the work's thematic material is tightly conceived, that it has an obvious cyclic structure comprising a sequence of movements and that Mr Gershwin knew exactly what he was doing when he wrote it. Mr Bernstein clearly thinks he knows better than Mr Gershwin and that this much-loved work could only benefit from



his "improvements". "It doesn't matter," he implies. "It's only Gershwin." If he treated any other composer with such high-handed disdain he would be run out of town.

Members of the jury, those of you who have lent this recording both ears may well be affronted by the arrogance of the defendant who, relying on his justified status as a musical genius, has hoisted with impunity this travesty on to a gullible public. The crime may have been committed more than half a century ago but that is no excuse. I put it to you that there is but one verdict you can reach. *Jeremy Nicholas is a freelance writer and broadcaster, and the author of biographies of Godowsky and Chopin as well as four reference books on classical music.*





### Our review from October 1960

"There are several fine versions available but this goes straight into the very top class. For me it goes right to the top, for Mr Bernstein is not only brilliant where brilliance is called for but he is supremely affectionate in the improvisatory passages and gives the impression of thoroughly enjoying himself, one that is by no means common."

(WA Chislett)

### Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue

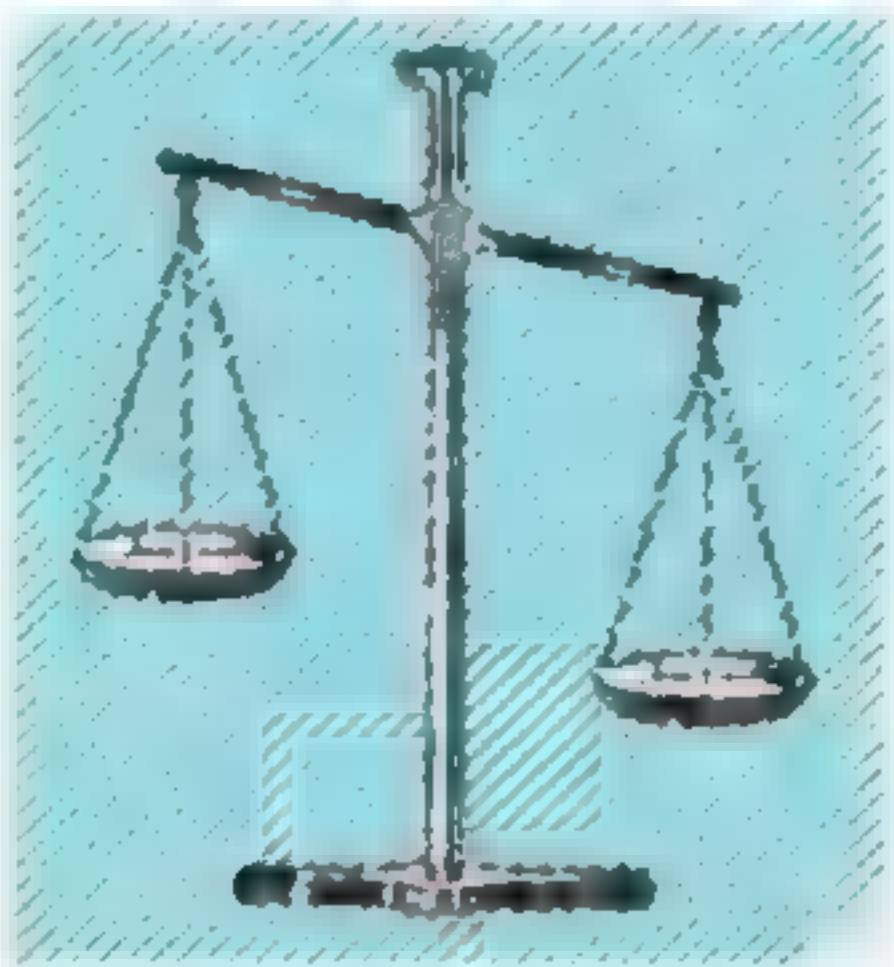
Columbia Symphony Orchestra / Leonard Bernstein *pf*

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## DEFENCE: PHILIP CLARK

'The Rhapsody must begin with that totemic skyscraper clarinet solo and outline the main themes – the rest is a movable feast'

### The case for



Ladies and gentlemen of this jukebox jury, you must understand that Prosecuting Counsel is attempting to peg his charge of first-degree musical butchery on a falsehood – Leonard Bernstein's relationship with the music of George Gershwin was as enduring as it was complex; never from his lips any phrase like "It's only Gershwin."

Mr Nicholas chooses to "bury" Bernstein by insinuating that he treats Gershwin's "tightly conceived...cyclic structure" in an unsympathetically heavy-handed manner. My client's thought that *Rhapsody in Blue* is merely a "string of separate paragraphs" gets hauled over the coals. But let's not forget Bernstein's preface to Charles Schwartz's 1973 Gershwin biography where he again took an opportunity to ponder Gershwin's "structural inefficiency" before concluding: "What's important is not what's wrong with the *Rhapsody* but what's right with it. And what's right is that each of those inefficiently connected episodes is in itself melodically inspired, harmonically truthful, rhythmically authentic."

On another occasion Bernstein suggested: "You can remove any of these stuck-together sections and the piece still goes on as bravely as before. It can be a five-minute piece or a 12-minute piece. And in fact, all these things are being done to it every day. And it's still *Rhapsody in Blue*." He makes an eloquent point. The 39-bar cut Mr Nicholas cites might feel unwarranted and severe but essentially the jitterbugging juggernaut carries on regardless. Those 39 bars, charming as they are, do little to intensify or develop Gershwin's melodic narrative; they are more ballast than nourishment, a retread of the same old same old gestures, flourishes, grooves.

As erudite jury members are no doubt aware, *Rhapsody in Blue* was commissioned by the danceband leader Paul Whiteman and, after its 1924 premiere, thrived and prospered in an intriguing no man's land between popular and concert-hall music. Inside Whiteman's

polished commercial music operation, cuts and adaptations were commonplace. *Rhapsody in Blue* has never been immune from the pop industry's siphoning off of Big Tune, Greatest Hit moments, that guarantee audiences their jollies without obliging them to suffer "lesser" scene-setting formalities. The *Rhapsody* must begin with that totemic skyscraper clarinet solo and outline the main themes. The rest is a movable feast.

I submit as evidence of the right-headedness of Bernstein's cutting instincts the EuroArts DVD of jazz pianist Marcus Roberts's reimagining of *Rhapsody in Blue* with the BPO under Seiji Ozawa. By implanting pockets of improvisation inside Gershwin's already overstacked structure,

this *Rhapsody* reaches a critical mass and topples over. Bernstein's cuts are by no means ideal: he effectively mulches two piano cadenzas into one but his instinct to compress rather than expand is sound. And compared with Roberts's pendulous modern jazz reharmonisations, Bernstein's swung quavers aren't worth fretting about.

As the defendant in any self-respecting episode of *Rumpole of the Bailey* or *Perry Mason* is about to be taken down to the docks, a note arrives in the nick of time explaining to the court that, no, he can't possibly be guilty of stabbing his victim through

the heart with the left hand because of a childhood honeycomb fracture. I, too, have smoking-gun evidence. I refer the jury to Gershwin's own 1927 recording of *Rhapsody in Blue* with Whiteman where – guess what – he cuts exactly the same passage as Bernstein! Gershwin had the moral right to cut what he liked of course, and I suspect he was obliged to make cuts by the time restrictions on 78rpm recordings. But Bernstein was following historical precedent and, while no one would claim this *Rhapsody in Blue* as definitive, his thoughtful, informed grappling with Gershwin's structural deficit is worthy of respect. ●

Philip Clark is a composer-turned-improviser and a Gramophone critic. He also contributes to *The Wire*, *Classic FM* and *International Piano* magazines and is currently writing a book about Dave Brubeck.





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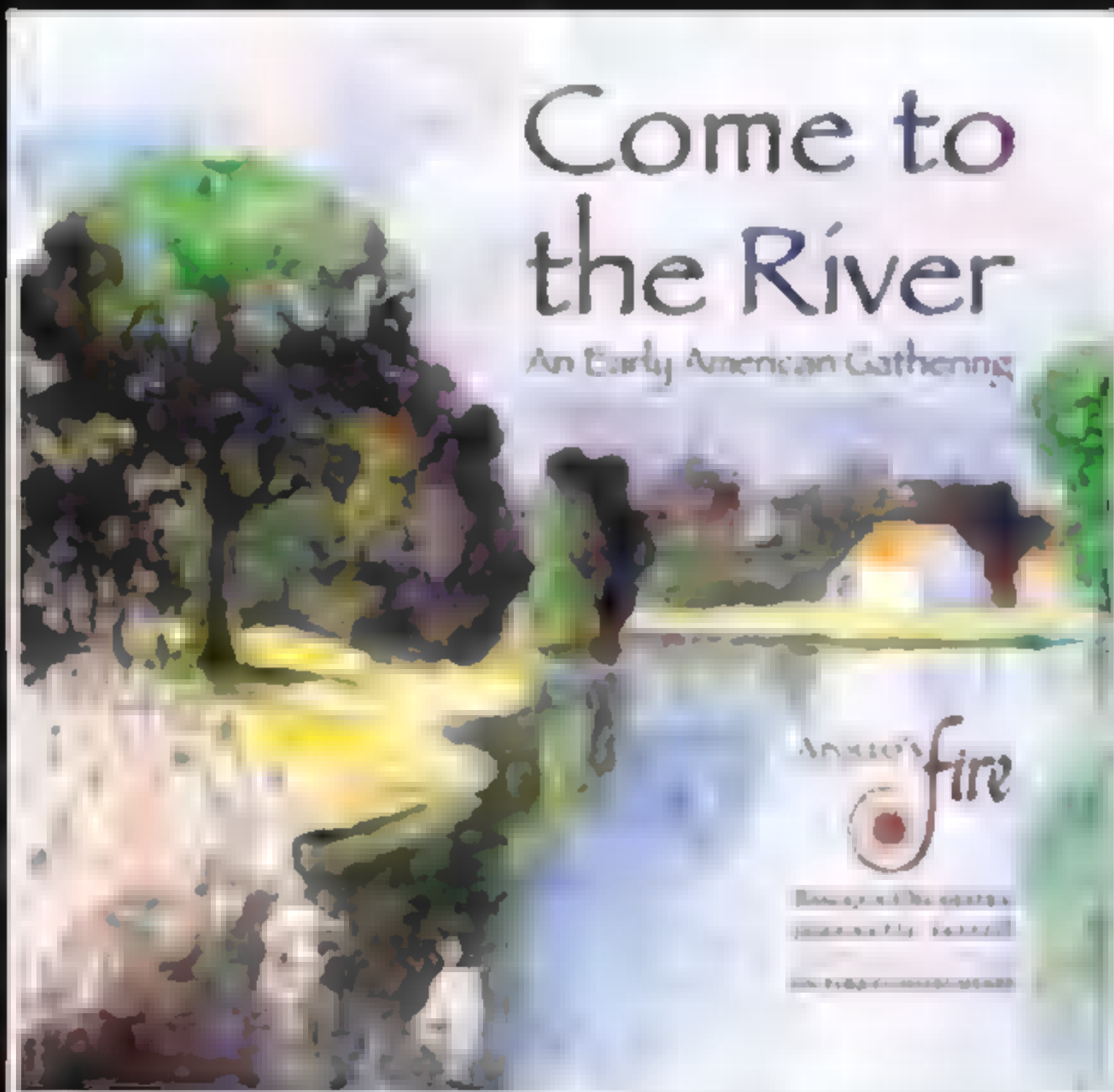
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PROPER NOTE

## BIOGRAPHY OF AN INSTRUMENT

# Arnold Dolmetsch's Bressan Recorder

Losing a prized recorder led early-music pioneer Dolmetsch to create his own, writes **Gavin Dixon**

**R**ecorder-playing made a surprising resurgence in the 20th century after around 200 years of neglect. The story of its revival is closely linked to the history of one particular instrument and how it was almost lost for good when entrusted to a forgetful boy.

The recorder was made by Peter Bressan in the first quarter of the 18th century. In 1905 it was bought by the early-music pioneer Arnold Dolmetsch, who used it in performances with his family ensemble. One evening in 1919, they were in London to give a concert. Afterwards, they returned home by train, with Arnold's seven-year-old son Carl carrying a bag containing the recorder. At Waterloo, they queued for the train. It was a long wait and Carl put the bag down. Eventually they boarded but it wasn't until they had departed that anybody noticed the bag had been left on the concourse.

In later life, Carl would make amends to the world of recorder-playing by becoming its first virtuoso of modern times. But in the immediate aftermath, his father faced a dilemma. Their concerts relied on recorder music but at the time recorders were very rare indeed.

So he set about making a replacement. He had a few rough measurements but, for the most part, he had to rely on memory. To make matters worse, 18th-century recorders have a complex bore profile, which the makers kept secret so as not to aid competitors. Without that vital information, it remained all but impossible to make a recorder that played in tune.

After many months of experimentation, Dolmetsch had a breakthrough. He ran into the kitchen of the family home shouting "Eureka! Eureka! I've got it!" and danced round, repeatedly playing the notes he had been having trouble with, but which were now perfectly tuned. This event marked the birth of the modern recorder. It meant that Dolmetsch could begin producing them, eventually leading to the ubiquitous school instruments we know today.

**'The event  
marked the  
birth of  
the modern  
recorder'**

Some years later, the clarinettist Geoffrey Rendall was passing a pawn shop near Waterloo and spotted a familiar-looking recorder in the window. He bought it for five shillings. Knowing how happy his friend Dolmetsch would be to see the instrument again, Rendall organised a surprise reunion lunch. When the time came, Rendall began to unwrap his brown paper package. As soon as a corner of the instrument appeared, Dolmetsch cried "Mine!" and seized the recorder. Rendall was later rewarded with a gift of one of Dolmetsch's earliest reproductions.

The Bressan recorder (right) is now on display at the Horniman Museum next to another Dolmetsch prototype, dating from the years when the original was still lost. It is a testament to his incredible memory that the two instruments look almost exactly the same. ©





## QUIZ

# Who am I?

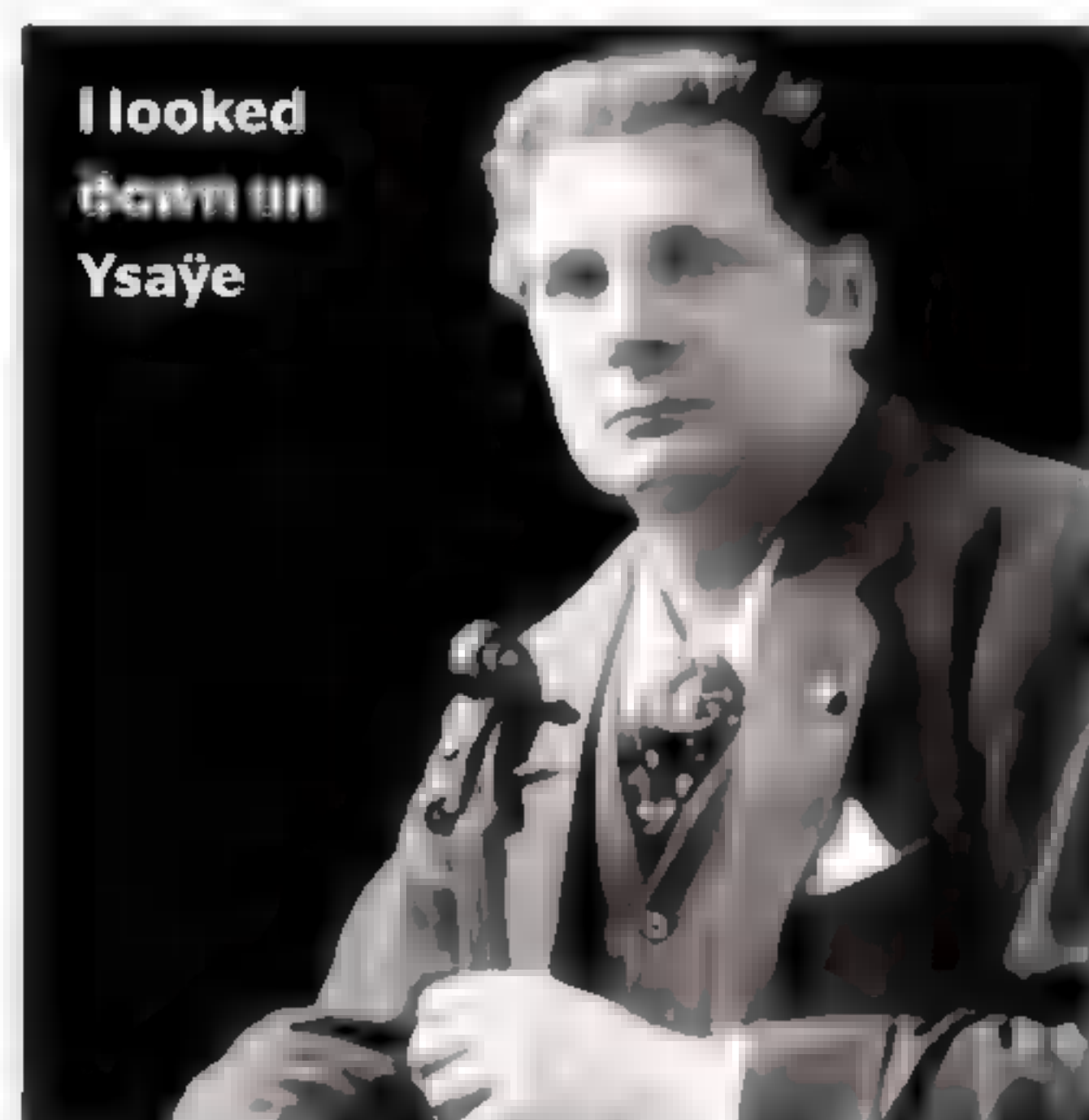
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At my heart, surrounded by a tangled web of thorns, stands a figure reaching up to a fiery ball, representing an unattainable state of musical perfection.

I am to be found buried in the velvet plushness of



what Vikram Seth's novel *An Equal Music* describes as "the sacred shoebox of chamber music". Ysaÿe, Saint-Saëns and Britten have all performed beneath me.

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## QUIZ SOUNDBITES

### OPUS ARTE

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Teatro Regio, Torino

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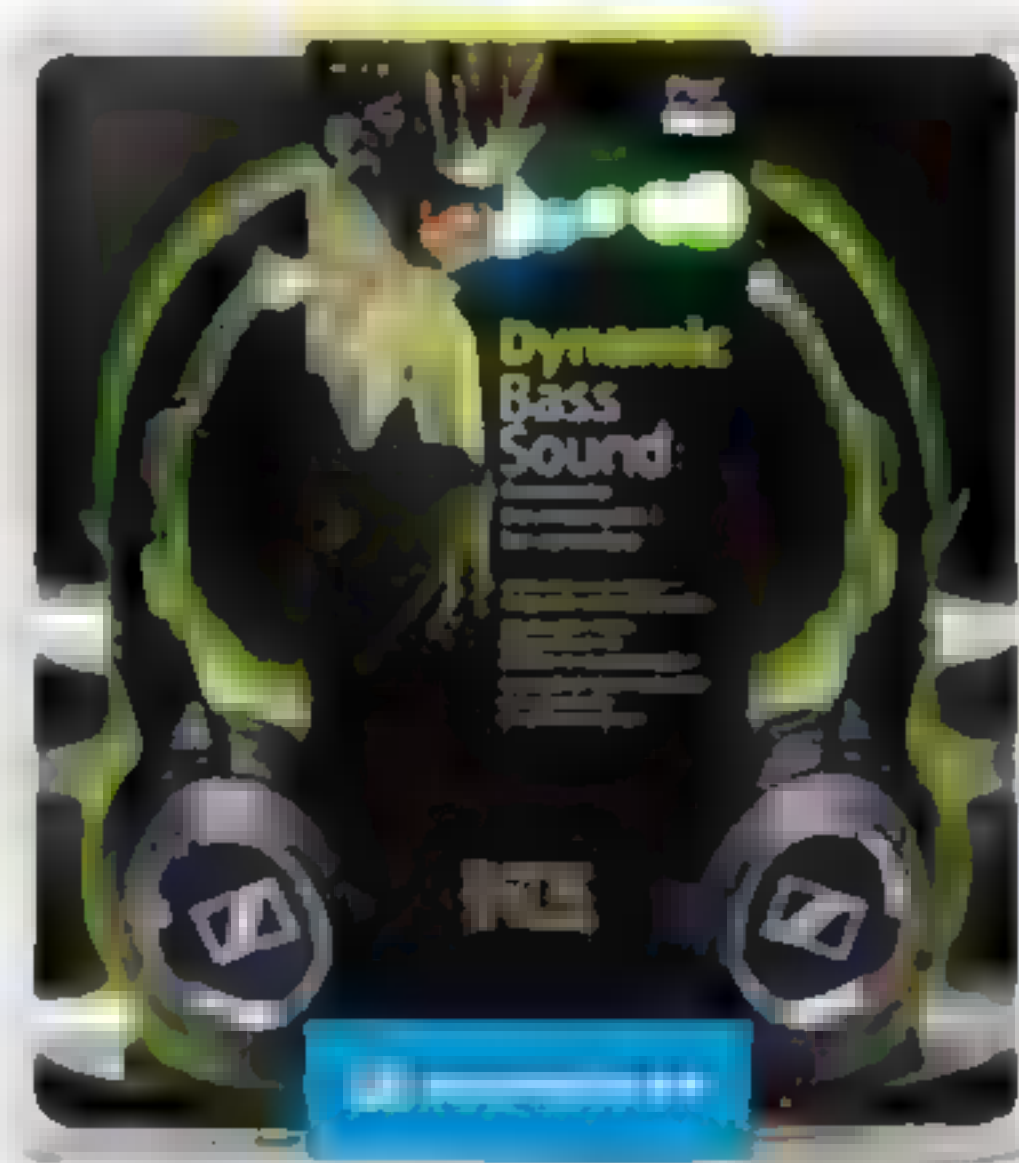
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# The Music comes first

A media frenzy surrounds Gustavo Dudamel but he rarely gets the chance to talk about the actual musical works he loves. **Mark Swed** is disarmed by a man with a phenomenal memory for scores who can sing all the works he performs

**Gustavo Dudamel** photographed for Gramophone by **Richard Reinsdorf** at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles



Gustavo Dudamel's airy office in the gleaming Walt Disney Concert Hall is bathed in warm, soft, early afternoon LA light, making it a peculiar setting for an interview about his new Nordic-themed recordings with the Gothenburg Symphony. Moreover, the 30-year-old Venezuelan conductor has Brahms on his mind. He is halfway through Brahms Unbound, a festival with which he is wrapping up his second season as the Los Angeles Philharmonic's music director. Over a span of five weeks he matches each of the composer's four symphonies and the *German Requiem* with new music. His morning dress rehearsal was of the Brahms Second and Sofia Gubaidulina's *Glorious Percussion*, a massive concerto for five soloists, the stage crowded with a vast variety of percussion instruments. Add a further distraction: he is a new father.

But Dudamel can easily launch into a discussion (replete with extensive sung examples) of Nielsen's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, Sibelius's Second and Bruckner's Ninth – the repertoire of the new three-disc Deutsche Grammophon set – as if teleported some 6000 miles to Sweden. Or back to his native Venezuela, since these symphonies have indelible associations with his youth. Most interviews with this fantastically in-demand conductor (and he doesn't give many these days) still focus exclusively on the phenomenon of Venezuela's

*Nielsen was hugely exotic to Dudamel and Dudamel was just as exotic to the Swedes. 'It is a culture very far from my Latin soul but when I arrived there it was magic'*

El Sistema and his emergence from that remarkable music education programme. But he's a musician who really thinks about the music he conducts and it is this about which I want to ask him. Underestimating his photographic memory, I bring the scores along in case he wants to refer to them. Dudamel conducts pretty much everything other than new works from memory.

He became music director of the Gothenburg Symphony in 2007 for obvious reasons. Dudamel's accelerated rise to fame after winning the Gustav Mahler Conducting Competition in Bamberg, Germany, in 2004 clearly out-paced his professional conducting experience. Sweden's second city had a respected orchestra, founded by the composer Wilhelm Stenhammar in 1905, but Gothenburg was none the less far enough from the limelight that Dudamel might build his repertoire and learn the ways of running a professional orchestra without attracting undue international interest.

At least that must have been the high hopes of his management. Dudamel himself seems altogether delighted in calling attention to his early work in Gothenburg. The DG set is devoted to live recordings made during his first three seasons with the orchestra of works he had not conducted before, with the exception of two student performances of the Sibelius. The Bruckner Ninth was his first Bruckner. His only experience with Nielsen had been a single performance of the First Symphony. "I want to keep the memory alive," he says.

The idea of embarking on Nielsen and Sibelius in Gothenburg also has obvious appeal. Nielsen had been assistant conductor to Stenhammar in 1918 and again in 1921 and 1922. Sibelius led his Second Symphony with the orchestra on three occasions. For this recording, Dudamel conducted the orchestra's 138th performance of the Second.

Coming to Gothenburg as a 26-year-old from Venezuela, where his previous experience as a music director was with the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra, and speaking very little English – "It is still difficult for me," he admits – Dudamel cites the "amazing contrast" of what he had expected the players to be and what they turned out to be. "It is a culture very far from my Latin soul," he observes. "But when I arrived there it was magic." Still, Dudamel learnt that even with the most

open-minded musicians, it takes time for a relationship to develop, no matter how much goodwill exists. They knew the Nielsen and Sibelius symphonies so well that he found they could play them perfectly after a single rehearsal. But he insisted on exploring the works anew, from bottom up, in marathon five- and six-hour rehearsals. The fact is, Nielsen was hugely exotic to Dudamel, and Dudamel was just as exotic to the Swedes. Dudamel credits the final result to be a 50-50 exchange, as a young conductor from a radically different background tested his ideas against the orchestra's collective wisdom.

As anyone who has witnessed this young conductor knows, he has an infectious enthusiasm that can disarm even the crustiest of players. When I visited Gothenburg two years ago, Christer Thorvaldsson, then the leader, who had been with the the orchestra for 36 years, told me that Dudamel was the best conductor he had ever worked with.

Dudamel likes to credit his success to his mentor, José Antonio Abreu, the founder of the famed Venezuelan youth music programme El Sistema, and it was Abreu who surprised the young Dudamel with Nielsen. "One day, Maestro Abreu called me into his office," Dudamel recalls. "He was sitting there, and he handed me a score. 'Now you have to learn this,' he said. It was Nielsen Four. "Let's follow the score,' he ▶

## The meteoric rise of a global phenomenon

How Dudamel and his mentor were catapulted on to the world stage



Only four or five years ago barely anyone had heard of Gustavo Dudamel and still fewer knew the name of his great patron, José Antonio Abreu. Then a number of things happened. The Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra toured feverishly, with Dudamel as their hyperactive, charismatic conductor. DG signed Dudamel. Dudamel signed to the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and not long afterwards to the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

So the world's media became interested, then absorbed in the

story of El Sistema, the philanthropic Venezuelan programme created by Abreu that elevated music education to the level of social improvement. Children were finding a way to escape, culturally, spiritually and in some cases materially, from the slums through music.

It stood in enlightened contrast to the decline of music education in many Western, developed nations. But perhaps not for much longer; many Western societies, from LA to Scotland, have launched their own versions of El Sistema.



The world begins:  
Dudamel in the Grieg  
Mahler Conducting  
Competition, 2004





*To say you want to change the sound is not respectful. You have your ideas but you must try to find a balance. And what you hope for is a new inspiration*







Dudamel comes of age:  
'I'm not so old - I'm 30.  
But I feel old'

## Working with Dudamel

**He's a conductor of great energy yet he also provides soloists with a solid safety net, says Venezuelan pianist Gabriela Montero**



I have played more than 10 different concertos with Gustavo and we share a wonderful rapport. As a friend and colleague he is so flexible and a great listener. He is eager to create a vision of the work together but also aware of the need to support the soloist's ideas. We have performed everything from Beethoven to Rachmaninov to Prokofiev, and I have always felt that I had the freedom to be spontaneous onstage and that he would provide a solid safety net. He is an incredible accompanist with a wonderful ear and sense of intuition.

In rehearsal Gustavo is very intent on capturing the character of a piece. He likes to bring out the personalities of the different instruments and to emphasise the contrasting sounds. He demonstrates his ideas very physically and metaphorically, too. He is detailed but not neurotic about that detail, so he always conveys the bigger picture.

He has so much energy and a very Venezuelan sensibility on and off the stage. We did all the Beethoven concertos in Caracas a few years ago and after each concert we went out with the orchestra and danced salsa. If you look at Gustavo's iPod it contains everything from the Cuban singer Compay Segundo to salsa to merengue and then Mahler, Brahms and Wagner. He is a very eclectic guy and his exuberance onstage is part of his hunger and joy for life.

I think Gustavo has not only brought his brilliance and talent to the classical world but also a different energy. In Venezuela classical music is new and exciting. If you go to a performance of Beethoven's Fifth, it looks like a rock concert. So what he brings to the podium is a purity and simplicity in his relationship to the music. If you look at the orchestra they are positively in love!

► told me as he put on a recording. I don't remember which one it was. And you know, it was a different world. How the lines break and jump to another thing with no relation to what went before was completely different from the Beethoven, Brahms and Mahler I had grown up with.

"The first movement is so many things. How do you say it, eclectic? But when you arrive to the second movement, it's like a sweet smell." Here Dudamel begins singing and continues doing so, getting more and more excited as he illustrates the symphony. "My God, after all these crazy things, everything is right there.

"What I remember of the third movement is the effect it had on Maestro Abreu. The third movement is one of the most amazing things I have ever conducted in my life, and when Maestro Abreu listened he became very dramatic. But the image I will always have in my head is watching Maestro Abreu during the last movement, with the dialogue between the timpani. By then I had stopped reading the score, and began studying him. He looked like a titan." Here Dudamel sinks down in his chair and adopts a hysterical grin as he sings long passages from the finale in a hilariously crazed manner, all the notes becoming the ha-ha-has of manic laughter. Dudamel describes the office becoming dark and Abreu's eyes looking as if they were on fire as he laughed and sang. "That, I think, will always be with me when I conduct Nielsen."

Dudamel's associations with Sibelius and Bruckner produce equally vivid memories of his past. One weekend day when he was a teenager in his home town of Barquisimeto, he was walking by the foyer of a theatre. "We were doing things that teenagers do," he says. "We had been studying music and now we were going to a place where we could play Nintendo. The doors to the theatre were open and a rehearsal was going on. From the foyer I could hear the brass playing the middle part of the first movement of Sibelius's Second Symphony," which Dudamel illustrates by singing in a booming voice. "And, wow, it was so warm, that brass sound. I didn't know who the composer was or anything about Sibelius, and three or four years passed until I finally heard the symphony. And it was an like an explosion in my head when that brass theme came in."

That was before Dudamel actually contended with Scandinavian brass sound. The orchestra approached dynamics less excitedly than had been Dudamel's natural wont. "When the orchestra sees a *fortissimo*, they keep this dark and very gentle colour," he says. "It's never PAAAM, PAH, PAH, but paaam, pah, pah," which he describes by singing the opening of the Sibelius Second up to its first *crescendo*. "It's always a noble sound. And I think that is a Nordic tradition. The brass school in Scandinavia is very solid. They have this kind of very round sound. So I try to approach the music close to that tradition."

Neeme Järvi, who was music director of the Gothenburg Symphony from 1982 to 2004 (succeeded for three years by Mario Venzago), recorded complete Sibelius and Nielsen symphony cycles with the orchestra. Dudamel sees his mission to "create a new history" while not significantly altering the orchestra's inherent sound. "To say you want to change the sound is not respectful," he insists. "I prefer to say that you try to balance the parts. You have your ideas but you must try to find a balance. And what you hope for is, let's say, a new inspiration."

The recordings of Nielsen's Fifth and Bruckner's Ninth were made in Dudamel's first season in Gothenburg, and Bruckner may be the most audacious choice of all. "I wanted to start with the Ninth," Dudamel explains, "and I remember Barenboim telling me that the first Furtwängler Bruckner was the Ninth, and also that it was Barenboim's first Bruckner."

Dudamel softly hums the symphony's opening bars. He studied the piece in the Venezuelan mountains and his arms unfold expansively as he describes how he absorbed Bruckner's sense of monumentality in a house that was in the shadow of the 16,000ft Pico Bolívar. "All the time I was looking at that mountain learning Bruckner and saying, 'Wow,



it's God', and you feel very small. I said to my friends, to everybody, Bruckner changes your life as a conductor, he forces you to change the way you conduct."

Unable to forget those mountains, Dudamel expresses what he feels is the incongruous situation of having to be in control of the Brucknerian moment while remaining under the spell of the bigger picture, the looming mountain. Like that mountain, all Bruckner symphonies have a similar outward structure, Dudamel suggests, and their very sonic presence makes him feel alive.

Advance copies of the recordings were not available before the interview but in a performance of Bruckner's Seventh with the Los Angeles Philharmonic this season, Dudamel adopted radically slow tempi. "Tempo is very subjective," he answers when I ask him about his recent propensity for such broad interpretations. The Brahms First that began Brahms Unbound was equally extreme, as was Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* last year. If Dudamel's singing of the opening of the Sibelius Second is anything to go by, it, too, will be time-stopping.

Dudamel explains that he is often looking for precise tempo relationships throughout a piece. In the Brahms symphony he needed a slow start so that he could exactly double the tempo at the end. But that is hardly subjective, and he confesses to a fondness for creating a sense of

30. But I feel old," says Dudamel at one point, already having mapped out at least the outlines of his 30s. His next few years will be primarily devoted to the LA Philharmonic, where his contract was recently extended to run through the 2018-19 season. Nor will he relinquish the music directorship of the Caracas orchestra he grew up with. He calls the players his family, and now it will no longer be exclusively a youth orchestra (the name has changed to the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra and, although the ensemble of more than 200 continues to grow with fresh recruits as young as 14 and 15, there will no longer be a cut-off age).

Asked if he thinks he's changed since that Bruckner Ninth three years ago, Dudamel answers: "Yes, a lot. When I go back and I listen to music I was doing before, I say, 'My God, why was I doing that?' Sometimes you forget. I have a good memory and I can remember perfectly things, notes, pages. I can see the pages.

"But sometimes ideas change. When you go back to a symphony you say, 'OK, I have a new idea.' But I love to remember how was the first time, why I was thinking that way. I'm sure it will be different next time but I think it was a very strong beginning." ●

*Dudamel's Gothenburg recording of Nielsen, Sibelius and Bruckner is issued by DG in August*

## *Dudamel absorbed Bruckner's sense of monumentality in a house in the shadow of the 16,000ft Pico Bolívar. 'I was saying, "Wow, it's God," and you feel very small'*

holding back when a symphony begins with a slow introduction, so that he can have a spectacular launch into an *allegro*.

"The slow tempi are not to show that I'm an old conductor and that I want to conduct slower, like Celibidache," he is quick to note. "No, no. And maybe in the future I will change."

A year ago, a penchant for slowness in the *Pathétique* got Dudamel into hot water with some critics when he included Tchaikovsky's symphony on his first tour with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The reviews were mixed and Dudamel describes a meeting with the Philharmonic artistic committee afterwards. "I was telling them that when I think back to the *Pathétique* I was wondering myself why it was so slow in the first *Allegro*. If it's marked *allegro*, was this too slow? I think it was necessary for me to be slow at that time to maintain tension. Now I want to keep that same amount of tension but make it a little faster.

"Right now I need the space to sustain things and then, in the future, maybe it will be faster. Sometimes I am really fast. Or maybe it will be slower but not heavy, just intense. I love it when the sound is intense all the time. Even if we have a *diminuendo*, less, less, less is more powerful when the intensity increases. This is the thing that we are learning together," he says of his orchestras in Gothenburg and Los Angeles. "But sometimes to think a lot is not good. Maybe to think less makes things more natural."

Next season will be Dudamel's sixth and last in Sweden. He has been made an honorary conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony and an honorary citizen of the town. He will continue to work with the orchestra, he promises, and says he would like next to record some of the living Swedish composers he has met and now champions, particularly Anders Hillborg. It was in Gothenburg that Dudamel first began learning new music.

By coincidence, his first major premiere was Gubaidulina's *Glorious Percussion*, which the symphony had commissioned. He didn't know what to make of it when he first looked at the score but now he is in love with the work and with doing new pieces. Already in Los Angeles Dudamel programmes substantially more new and recent music than any conductor of a major US orchestra. "I'm not so old. I'm

## *The exuberance that conquered the Proms* Sarah Kirkup reflects on a night that helped to seal Dudamel's fame



It was four years ago but the memories of *that* concert are still with me. Tickets had been sold out for months yet I found myself in a prized seat at the Royal Albert Hall to hear the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra.

That they were a young orchestra – their enthusiasm was beyond contagious – was part of the draw. But it was their young conductor, the then-26-year-old Dudamel, whose magnetism and exuberance on the podium were hard to resist. Not that it was all about theatricality – the Shostakovich Tenth Symphony in the

first half was a lesson in supremely controlled playing. But when they let rip with music from Latin America – Moncayo and Ginastera – there was a sense of celebration of which we were all a part. No one even objected to the shell-suit jackets in national colours, much less when they were tossed into the crowd with abandon.

The night was televised, and those final moments won the hearts of everyone watching. An ecstatically received CD of Latin American music followed. That Prom was undoubtedly a turning point in Dudamel's career.



Turning his back on tradition, Dudamel's L.A. Phil programmes more new music than any other major US orchestra.





# S STAR SOPRANO (IN WAITING)

Miah Persson is well known to cognoscenti but why is she not a household name? **Richard Fairman** believes she soon will be

**T**he beautiful period house nestles in a garden on three sides, the very picture of an English idyll, perhaps like Bly in *The Turn of the Screw*. In front of the porch a circular lead doorbell handle hangs down invitingly. I pull it but it does not sound as if there is any ring and nobody comes. A few moments later a ghostly shadow seems to pass by inside. I ring again but to no avail. Fortunately Miah Persson has passed on her mobile number, so I settle down at a wooden table in the garden to call her. She answers immediately and, as we talk, it becomes obvious that we are facing each other through the window – like the Governess and Peter Quint’s chilling encounter.

Inside, the atmosphere is happily very different. The house is brightly sunlit and welcoming, with a lovely view across a valley to wooded hills. Even so, *The Turn of the Screw* is on everybody’s mind. The day before we meet, Glyndebourne had sent out a press release announcing that, as Kate Royal is expecting a baby, Miah Persson will be taking over the role of the Governess. She was already due to sing Donna Elvira in the revival of *Don Giovanni*, so this is looking to be a very busy summer.

“To do Britten here in England and with an English director – that’s a dream,” she says. It is not her first time as the Governess but the previous occasion was eight years ago in Frankfurt, when she still had a lot to learn. “I arrived as a Susanna in the way I moved and acted, so the director spent all his time paring away those gestures, leaving me – well, like this,” she says, straightening her back like a prim English schoolmistress. “It came to the point in rehearsals where my shoulders were racked with tension and I felt I needed a weekend off for a massage. This is also an opera that affects you mentally,

because it is such a dark story, if you choose to go down that dark path of interpretation. It’s going to be interesting to do it at Glyndebourne. The Frankfurt production was very gloomy but this one [by Jonathan Kent] is relatively light and, when you come out from the theatre at Glyndebourne, everything is so sunny.”

Those eight years have seen Miah Persson make some big advances. Ask how things have changed and she immediately answers not about her career but about her private life. In that period she has been married, had two children and moved from her native Sweden to the UK. With so much going on, her career has been rather stop-and-start – engagements at the top international level, always glowingly reviewed (can anybody recall a single negative comment about this enchanting soprano?), but without the constant level of media attention that some other singers of her generation have attracted. The omission is rather mysterious, as she seems to have all of the requisite attributes to keep the marketing people busy – not least the good looks to attend a wonderful talent.

That comparative neglect will surely change. The young soprano who has been lighting up stages as a bright-eyed, radiantly blonde Susanna, Zerlina and Gretel is starting to think about moving on. “During those eight years I have gone from just starting off to being fairly established. My voice has become richer and, as your personality grows with marriage and children, so your range of expression expands. There are many more shades of love now. Also, I have the additional security of knowing what I can and can’t do and how far I can push myself.”

Her Mozart roles are a good pointer to the journey she is on. Five years ago she was offered *Fiordiligi* for the first time but thought it likely the role would not come

Persson would appear to have all the attributes to keep the marketing people happy





Throwing herself into the role:  
Persson as Mozart's Donna Elvira

round again often. Instead, she has played it in New York, Munich, Glyndebourne and Salzburg (the last two on DVD). Susanna has also been a constant companion through those eight years, though apparently not for much longer. "It's only recently that people have started inviting me to sing the Countess. It's going to be a challenge to give her a rounded portrait, as I think people often don't realise she is the same Rosina, that feisty girl, who twists everybody around her little finger. I just have one final Susanna left as a farewell. Once you sing the Countess, you can't really go back."

The metamorphosis of the soubrette into a lyric soprano is a gradual one. "Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* is my reference point," she says. "If I can still sing those high, silvery lines then I know that the voice hasn't changed too much. But now the Marschallin is starting to appeal to me more as a character, even if she is 10 years away. I'm also doing my first *bel canto* next year [Adina in *L'elisir d'amore* at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden] – a big step, because I've been classed as a very German singer with all my Mozart and Strauss." And how about Lulu? Surely that would be ideal, when most other singers do not have the top notes. "Oh no," she says, slightly horrified. "I'm not sure I have them myself!"

Our conversation drifts away from opera and to her song recital CDs. Two are new: an all-Schumann programme from BIS and a Freccital from Wigmore Hall Live. I ask whether she prefers to record in the studio or live. Her answer is a clear preference for studio recordings because of the amount of time they allow, though she says it can be difficult to let go. "In the studio it's very tempting to keep saying, 'No, that isn't good enough, let's do it again,' whereas you hear a live recording and think, 'Yes, that will do.' With live recordings you are always looking for the good points."

Does she have any favourites among her recordings? A hesitation suggests the answer might be no. But then she chooses her Scandinavian song recital on Hyperion ("a warm and loving memory"), followed by LSO Live's recent recording of Haydn's *The Seasons*, where she is partnered by her tenor husband, Jeremy Ovenden. As for the DVDs, she says she has never watched any of them all the way through – "Maybe, when I have grandchildren, I'll get them out and say proudly, 'Look, there's granny'" – but the Royal Opera's *Le nozze di Figaro* remains a genuine favourite "because I loved the production as a whole, the beauty of the sets,



the costumes, and Philip Langridge as Basilio – what a luxury!"

In the future there is Bach's B minor Mass for the first time, together with a long-delayed return to Britten's *Les illuminations*, which should be worth the wait. In opera, she admits to having three dream roles: Tatyana, the Marschallin and Violetta. "I don't think anyone would ever see me as Violetta, at least depending on how my first *bel canto* role goes. Tatyana I could sing, but it would have to be in a small house. As for the Marschallin, every time I'm onstage as Sophie I get a free lesson from one of the marvellous Marschallins I've sung alongside, like Renée Fleming at the Met."

There are also two more productions of *The Turn of the Screw* planned for 2013-14, the Britten centenary season. Hopefully more will follow. It would be an awful shame if her Governess reverted to being merely a ghostly apparition at the window. ☺

*Miah Persson's recital disc of Robert and Clara Schumann songs is released on BIS in September. Her recording of songs by Schubert, Grieg and Sibelius is released on WHLive in April 2012*

## Miah Persson playlist

### DVD

**Mozart – Le nozze di Figaro**  
Royal Opera / Antonio Pappano  
Opus Arte ② OA0990D (8/08)

An enchanting Susanna, her "constant companion" of the past decade, Miah Persson sparkles here in an intelligent period production.

**Mozart – Così fan tutte**  
Glyndebourne / Iván Fischer  
Opus Arte ② OA0970D (6/07)

Persson is in radiant voice as a hesitant, even troubled Fiordiligi in the delightful 2006 Glyndebourne Festival production.

### CD

**'Soul and Landscape'**  
Songs by Stenhammar, Sjögren, Rangström and Nystroem, with Roger Vignoles *pf*  
Hyperion ② CDA67329 (9/03)

The soprano's native Swedish composers are brought together in a "warm and loving" recital.

**Haydn – Die Jahreszeiten**  
LSO / Sir Colin Davis  
LSO Live ② LSO0708

Joyous singing caps a spirited live performance, with the soprano partnered by her tenor husband.



# ARNOLD'S CELLO CONCERTO A FAILURE?

*It's a  
masterpiece!*

More than 20 years after its uneasy premiere, Malcolm Arnold's Cello Concerto has at last found an ardent champion, Raphael Wallfisch. As the cellist records the work for Naxos, **Andrew Achenbach** listens in

There can't be many recent works with a more curious history than the Cello Concerto by Sir Malcolm Arnold. He wrote it, as he did all of his concertos, for a particular artist, in this instance Julian Lloyd Webber. By all accounts, the dedicatee's 1989 premiere with the RPO under Vernon Handley was an uneasy affair and not a critical success: some members of the orchestra were reportedly flummoxed by the thinness of the textures, fuelling rumours that the score was left in an unfinished state. With the composer already in marked decline both mentally and physically, he entrusted David Ellis with the task of putting together a new performing edition of the score. This was finally heard in Germany on June 15, 2003, and met with a cordial reception (the 81-year-old composer, sadly, was too infirm to attend). So, when I learnt that Naxos was committed to recording the work with a cellist of the calibre (and with the canny instinct) of Raphael Wallfisch, I was doubly curious to hear the piece – and you don't need me to tell you that Wallfisch has few peers when it comes to interpreting and championing British cello repertoire from the last 100 years.

Which is how I find myself, on a soggy Monday morning in February, making my way to Withington Girls' School in south

Manchester. There to greet me is the Northern Chamber Orchestra's manager, Jonathan Thackeray, who leads me to the Arts Centre, a particularly handsome facility which would be the envy of any educational establishment in the land. The performers are already in place – with, unexpectedly, the soloist seated facing the orchestra (of which more anon), and Nicholas Ward directing proceedings from the first desk – and busily polishing the first movement prior to the first take at 11am. Certainly, everything sounds securely “under the fingers”, so it comes as no surprise to learn that they have in fact already scored a notable success with the piece at a concert in Macclesfield 10 days earlier. “The audience reaction was most encouraging,” Ward tells me later. “People who know Arnold's music enjoyed it and those who didn't know what to expect were pleasantly surprised.”

The concerto lasts around 21 minutes and is cast in three movements, the first of which comprises a tautly argued *Allegro* in sonata form, with a rhythmic acuity to keep everyone on their toes – some of the off-beat *tuttis* will make you jump – yet shot through with songful lyricism, too (I'm reminded a little of Finzi's Cello Concerto). The *Lento* centrepiece could hardly be more different, a spare-textured, unnervingly bleak essay, dominated by some gaunt two-part counterpoint, with growling bass-lines

reminiscent of the opening of Sibelius's Fourth Symphony and plaintive solos for cor anglais and trumpet (Arnold's own instrument). Bringing up the rear is a roistering jig, which recycles material from the first movement and incorporates both a more poignantly reflective episode and a pithy cadenza before one exuberant final flourish. The sessions proceed with a minimum of fuss, producer David Ellis a quietly authoritative presence in the control room. After three complete takes of the slow movement, Wallfisch still isn't entirely happy with a passage involving some tricky harmonics but Ellis is able to reassure him: “Trust me, Raphael: if it gets any closer, it will sound out of tune!” Two and half hours later, the concerto is safely in the can and the cadenza polished to Wallfisch's satisfaction – all accomplished with time to spare.

Chatting in the control room afterwards, I am amazed to learn that Arnold never consulted Ellis about any aspect of the score, so complete was his trust in his capabilities (a former stalwart at BBC Manchester and an established composer in his own right, his close ties with Arnold date back over half a century). “Not long before he died,” recalls Ellis, “he got in touch again and asked me to rework a very early piano sonata into a

*‘It looks straightforward  
but the writing has its  
own challenges and you  
can't take it at face value’*

saxophone concerto. My initial reaction was that he was winding me up but, no, it was what he wanted. That will also be appearing on the CD along with the Flute Concertino and Symphony for Strings – a really strong work.”

Also present is Fiona Southey, another longstanding friend of the composer who was appointed his personal assistant in 2004. “I first got to know Malcolm around the time of the concerto's original composition. I was working for Novello when it acquired the Paterson catalogue, which had been Arnold's publisher up to that point. Then, of course, Malcolm moved to Novello full time, as it were.” I express my surprise that such a powerfully communicative work should have had to wait so long for its first recording. “I'll quote you on that, if you don't mind! What can I say? I'm delighted and thrilled with what I've heard – and Malcolm would have been, too. You know, every time I hear a performance of Malcolm's music, I always feel he's just walked into the room. David has done a superb job with the score – he's so inside the composer's sound world – and



# Arnold's Cello Concerto Session Report



take it at face value. Also, there simply wasn't enough for the soloist to do – it is a concerto, after all! But I think we've got a good balance now. You also probably noticed we tweaked the seating arrangement for the recording. Believe it or not, the winds often can't hear what's going on when the cellist is facing out. In fact, they probably heard much more this time round than in the concert performance. It's a bit like playing chamber music, really."

All of which is a potent reminder of the fact that Anglophiles everywhere owe Wallfisch a huge debt of gratitude, for his indefatigable exploration of a staggering quantity of unfairly overlooked repertoire by 20th-century British composers. "It's a body of music that's closest to my heart. There isn't a composer from that period whose music I haven't played. Without exception, they're all great works – not just the pieces for cello and orchestra but there's so much superb chamber and instrumental music too. It's a chance for these pieces to have another life – I suppose I've made it my life's mission in a way and I've just had a great opportunity to do it, from those early BBC studio recordings to countless CDs for the likes of Naxos, BMS, Dutton and Chandos. Oh, and did I mention that John Joubert is writing a concerto for me? A marvellous composer, 84 this year and still very active. To say I'm excited would be an understatement!" **Arnold's Cello Concerto is out on Naxos in September**

Raphael Wallfisch and the Northern Chamber Orchestra (above) in sessions for the Cello Concerto of Malcolm Arnold (top); composer and dedicatee, Julian Lloyd Webber (left)

Malcolm would have adored Raphael's playing. His tone is gorgeous, and I think he has caught the chiaroscuro quite beautifully."

This is Wallfisch's third CD with the Northern Chamber Orchestra for Naxos (a fourth is already planned for 2012), and naturally he jumped at the chance to record a concerto by such a major figure. "I do remember hearing that Arnold had written a concerto for Julian [Lloyd Webber] but wasn't able to catch the premiere. I'd known about the revision for a number of years but when I finally took a good look at the score, I quickly realised that, even with David's amendments and fleshing out, I would need to make some changes and additions to the solo part. It was originally pitched very low – too low, in fact, more like a deep baritone than a tenor. The writing looks quite straightforward but actually isn't; it has its own particular challenges and you can't just

## The Essential Malcolm Arnold



**Complete Symphonies**  
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Arnold's gripping symphonic odyssey in consistently lucid and spirited performances that enjoyed the composer's imprimatur. Outrageous value at Naxos price.



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**Complete Brass Chamber Music**  
Fine Arts Brass Ensemble  
Nimbus © NI5804

Cracking performances of Arnold's outstandingly idiomatic output for brass ensemble, including the First Quintet of 1961 (long since acknowledged as a classic of the genre) and meaty Symphony for Brass from 18 years later.



# Unleashing the forces of nature

Transforming Vivaldi's scribbblings into pictorial representations of *The Four Seasons* demands imagination and daring, finds **William Yeoman** as he surveys the recordings on offer

**A**s the Venice Baroque Orchestra's director Andrea Marcon observes, "To be a true performer of *The Four Seasons* – indeed, of all Vivaldi – you must be like an actor interpreting the text". Spring: birdsong carried by the gentle breeze, sudden storms, snoozing goatherds, and nymphs and shepherds joined in a rustic dance. Summer: man and beast wilting under a scorching sun; swarms of insects and the flash and crash of lightning and thunder. Autumn: drunken dancers celebrating the harvest before falling into a slumber; the brash horns and crackling gunfire of the dawn hunt. Winter: chattering teeth and trembling limbs; sitting beside a fire listening to the rainfall upon the roof and the winds at war.

Not only were *Le quattro stagioni*, the first four of the 12 concertos comprising Vivaldi's Op 8 *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione* (first published in 1725), inspired by the paintings of Marco Ricci (1676-1730) and accompanied by descriptive sonnets, summarised above; there are further comments and indications of tempo and dynamics in the score itself. Thus, any performance worth its salt must stand or fall according to its ability to realise Vivaldi's programmatic intentions – for today's listener. So which

version to buy? It's probably fair to say the four violin concertos that are *The Four Seasons* are among the most famous and best-loved pieces of classical music in the world, if not the most – witness the hundreds of recordings issued over the last half-century and countless appearances on concert programmes, not to mention the sheer variety of approaches, from old-school romanticism and neo-historicism to arrangements for electric guitar, hurdy-gurdy, flute, recorder and jazz trio. Perhaps the real question is not which version to buy, but how many.

#### Modern-instrument recordings

It's fitting that the first complete recording of *The Four Seasons* should have been made by Italians – in 1942 by the Orchestra of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia of Rome – but the recording that really opened the ears of the public to this then relatively unknown composer's music was that made by American violinist **Louis Kaufman** with the Concert Hall Chamber Orchestra (read the strings of the New York Philharmonic) under Henry Swoboda at Carnegie Hall in 1947 (Kaufman went on to record the remaining eight concertos of Op 8 in 1950; the complete set is now available on Naxos). These are committed performances, far from fully communicating the more picturesque elements of the music but bristling with

the excitement of discovery and possessed of a wholly affecting warmth and vitality.

**John Corigliano**, again with members of the NY Phil, this time under Leonard Bernstein (1963-64) shows a comparable level of commitment and expressive intent.

The earlier **I Musici** recordings (they tackled *The Four Seasons* six times between 1955 and 1995 – take your pick) and **Piero Toso** with I Solisti Veneti under Claudio Scimone (1973) find common ground in a certain uniformity of tone, a fondness for *legato* and the monotonous terraced dynamics that bedevil so many pre-HIP (historically informed performance) recordings. Nevertheless, the results are far from unattractive.

More successful – perhaps because more historically informed – is the classic 1970 account from **Alan Loveday** with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields under Neville Marriner. It's still a largish sound, the tempi are somewhat leisurely and the birdsong in the opening *Allegro* of "Spring" lacks the rhythmic flexibility we've come to expect from today's performers; but the suavity of the playing and the elegantly propulsive "storm" sections, such as the *Presto* of "Summer", as well as Simon Preston's attractive continuo playing, still make this a viable choice for those preferring to stay with modern instruments.

For sheer fun and chutzpah, you can't go past the 1982 recording with **Isaac Stern**





*'Spring: birdsong carried by the gentle breeze, sudden storms, snoozing goatherds, and nymphs joined in a rustic dance'*

A contemporary score of  
The Four Seasons, from the  
Manchester Concerto Partbooks  
collection, currently housed in  
the Cheshire salt mines



## The Gramophone Collection

("Spring"), **Pinchas Zukerman** ("Summer"), **Shlomo Mintz** ("Autumn") and **Itzhak Perlman** ("Winter") and the Israel Philharmonic conducted by Zubin Mehta. Everyone seems to be having a ball and each violinist is stylistically distinctive enough to make this quite a varied listening experience. My own preference is for the clean phrasing and restrained passion of Stern but Perlman's *Largo* from "Winter" is really something, creating a Dickensian picture of rosy-cheeked children huddled around the hearth.

**Nigel Kennedy** and **Anne-Sophie Mutter** have each recorded *The Four Seasons* twice: the former with the English Chamber Orchestra in 1989 (is this still the biggest-selling classical recording of all time?) and with members of the Berlin Philharmonic (2004); the latter with the Vienna Philharmonic under Karajan (1984) and with the Trondheim Soloists (1999). Mutter is reasonably well-behaved with Karajan but, on the whole, she and Kennedy appear brash, wayward and less concerned with painting a landscape than a self-portrait.

By contrast, the thoughtful, elegant 1994 account from **Gil Shaham** with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra demands serious consideration; the solo work is incisive if a little monochrome and the orchestral playing crisp and transparent, allowing the listener's imagination to fill in the blanks. The same could be said of **Joshua Bell** and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields' urbane yet sympathetically pastoral version from 2008.

**Gidon Kremer** and Kremerata Baltica's bold 2000 recording is notable not only for its energy but for the coupling with Astor Piazzolla's sexy, beguiling *Las cuatro estaciones Porteñas* ("The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires"); there is also a nice alternative of the same coupling available with **Lara St John** and the

Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela under Eduardo Marturet on Ancalagon.

Also worth a listen are **Janine Jansen** accompanied by a one-to-a-part ensemble and a youthful **Viktoria Mullova** with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe under Claudio Abbado. But the modern-instrument recording that pushes all the right buttons for me is that by **Thomas Zehetmair** and Camerata Bern (1996): crisp, light yet driven, with plenty of bounce and those percussive accents more common with period performances. The *Presto* from "Summer" has to be heard to be believed.

### Period-instrument recordings

There is no surviving autograph score of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* but a set of instrumental parts in manuscript form, made in Italy in Vivaldi's day, does exist in Manchester (see the excerpt of "Spring" on page 47), with important variations to the published version which shed some light on the performance practice of the time. Most period-instrument ensembles and many HIP ensembles playing on modern instruments consult this manuscript as a matter of course, in conjunction with the first and sometimes second published versions. Nevertheless, the interpretative decisions arrived at are as many and various as the number of ensembles.

Nikolaus Harnoncourt was first off the period-instrument block with his pioneering 1977 recording with Concentus Musicus Wien and **Alice Harnoncourt** as soloist; this created quite a sensation in its day and its harshness of tone and extremes of tempo still have the power to raise eyebrows. Cleaner, leaner and more "objective" in their pictorialism are two wonderful 1982 recordings, **Simon Standage** with the English Concert under Trevor Pinnock, and

various soloists with the Academy of Ancient Music under **Christopher Hogwood**. The latter's rhythmic subtlety and finely judged adumbrations of Vivaldi's rustic tableaux still make this a viable alternative to the more extrovert approach taken by the Italians, of which more anon.

More admitting of rhythmic flexibility and rhetorical flourishes is **Monica Huggett** with Nicholas Kraemer and the Raglan Baroque Players (1988); also of interest is Huggett's more recent recording with the Portland Baroque Orchestra (2005). **Andrew Manze** with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra under Ton Koopman (1996) is disappointing: an anachronistically big sound, a too-prominent harpsichord and too-strict tempi.

Better by far is **Christina Day Martinson** with Boston Baroque and Martin Pearlman (2009); a generally strict pulse is maintained throughout but the tempi are brisk, the phrasing is shapely and the ornamentation tasteful and apposite to the underlying programme. Also good is **Elizabeth Wallfisch** with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and Paul Dyer, with well-judged tonal contrasts and rhetorical pauses adding to the work's dramatic sweep. Mention, too, should be made of the excellent **Nils-Erik Sparf** and the Drottningholm Baroque Ensemble – for many years the must-have recording.

But it's been the Italians who have made some of the most radical contributions to historical performance when it comes to Vivaldi. One of the first ensembles to take a no-holds-barred approach was Il Giardino Armonico, whose 1993 recording with violinist **Enrico Onofri** and director Giovanni Antonini features those now-characteristic percussive downbeats reinforced by the strumming of the theorbo and the thickly voiced chords of

### THE MODERN-INSTRUMENT CHOICE



**Thomas Zehetmair**; Camerata Bern Berlin Classics ® O115212BC  
Historically informed, modern-instrument playing at its finest, with Zehetmair and Co bringing out the programmatic elements and novel architectonics with a searing intensity matched only by the strategic ellipticality and unerring good taste of Zehetmair's solo work.

### THE PERIOD-INSTRUMENT CHOICE



Soloists; Conc Italiano / **Rinaldo Alessandrini** Naïve ® OP30363  
Alessandrini brings all the colour and spectacle of Baroque opera to Vivaldi's music, with the soloists of each concerto sweeping through a sylvan landscape that in its turn is richly painted by the remaining strings and Alessandrini's spicy, evocative harpsichord realisations.

### THE ECCENTRIC CHOICE



**Red Priest** Red Priest ® RP003  
For purists, mentioning Red Priest is like waving a red flag at a bull. But for fans there's nothing like their blend of virtuosity and mayhem. This is *The Four Seasons* like you've never heard it before, with an out-of-control aviary taking over the asylum.



the harpsichord. Onofri is superb, employing all manner of articulation and bow strokes, sometimes at almost superhuman speed, to colour every line of Vivaldi's sonnets.

When it comes to sheer velocity and aggression, **Fabio Biondi** is hard to beat. In his 1991 recording for Opus 111 and 2003 recording for Virgin, both with Europa Galante, the beauty but also the cruelty of nature is expressed in swathes of chiaroscuro.

Exhibiting many of those same qualities is perhaps the most rhetorically successful recording of them all, that by soloists **Stefania Azzaro, Mauro Lopes Ferreira, Antonio de Secondi** and **Francesca Vicari** with Concerto Italiano under the formidable scholar and harpsichordist Rinaldo Alessandrini (who incidentally plays harpsichord continuo on the 1991 Biondi recording). Recorded in 2002, it remains the first choice for many, its combination of almost operatic narrative drive and descriptive power proving a potent mix. Under Alessandrini's flamboyant yet intelligent direction, his soloists twitter, soar, scurry, tremble and sing with abandon, while the ensemble create a technicoloured backdrop of frightening splendour.

It's almost too much; which is why many will be drawn to **Giuliano Carmignola** and the Venice Baroque Orchestra under Andrea Marcon. This has all the virtues of the Alessandrini without its vices; moreover, Carmignola brings a contemporary edge to his interpretation; this is a *Four Seasons* from the self-conscious perspective of a modern musician, true to the original sources but unwilling simply to ignore what has come after. The final *Allegro* of "Spring" has a real gypsy quality; the *Presto* of "Summer" is positively ferocious; the final *Allegro* of "Autumn", so muscular and bold, combines the exhilaration and poignancy of the hunt; "Winter" is a rain-streaked snowscape, with the fireside offering warmth without solace; but throughout there is a certain wry detachment that paradoxically intensifies rather than diminishes the overall effect.

#### Arrangements

In keeping with Baroque practice, there was an almost immediate flood of arrangements of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* following its publication, such was its popularity, especially in France where Michel Corrette (1707-95) made use of "Spring" for his 1765 motet *Laudate Dominum de coelis* and, conversely, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) arranged "Spring" for unaccompanied flute (1775). My favourite recording of the former is that by Le Parlement de Musique and La Maîtrise de Bretagne under **Martin Gester** (2008); I have

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY



DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1947 Kaufmann: Concert Hall CO / Swoboda	Naxos (S) ② 8 110297/8 (4/05)
1955 Ayo: I Musici	Philips (M) 422 139-2PLC (nla)
1959 Ayo: I Musici	Philips (M) ④ 464 750-2PM (12/97 <sup>R</sup> )
1963-64 Corigliano: NYPO / Bernstein	Sony (M) SMK47642
1969 Michelucci: I Musici	Philips (M) ④ 468 111-2PEQ
1970 Loveday: ASMF / Marriner	Decca (B) 475 7531DOR
1973 Toso: Solisti Veneti / Scimone	Apex (S) ② 2564 64373-2
1976 Galway (fl): Zagreb Sols	RCA (M) GD60748 (2/77 <sup>R</sup> )
1977 A Harnoncourt: Concentus Musicus Wien / N Harnoncourt	Warner (S) ② 2564 69054-8
1977 AAM / Hogwood	Decca (M) ④ 410 126-2OH
1977 Carmirelli: I Musici	Philips (M) ④ 410 001-2PH (4/83)
1982 Standage: English Concert / Pinnock	Archiv (M) ④ 474 616-2GOR
1982 Stern, Zukerman, Mintz, Perlman: Israel PO / Mehta	DG (F) 419 214-2GH
1983 Amsterdam Gtr Trio	RCA (F) 09026 61652-2
1984 Mutter: VPO / Karajan	EMI (F) 7470432 (2/85)
1985 Sparf: Drottningholm Baroque Ens	BIS (F) BIS-CD275
1987 Mullova: COE / Abbado	Philips (F) ④ 420 216-2PH (1/88)
1988 Huggett: Raglan Baroque Plyrs / Kraemer	Virgin (M) ② 561668-2
1989 Kennedy: ECO	EMI (F) 556253-2 (11/89 <sup>R</sup> )
1989 Corvisier, Martins (pfs)	Labor (F) LAB7018
1990 Agostini: I Musici	Philips (M) 422 402-2PH (nla)
1991 Biondi: Europa Galante	Naïve (B) V5112
1993 Onofri: Giardino Armonico Ens / Antonini	Teldec (F) 0630 14619-2
1994 Shaham: Orpheus CO	DG (F) 439 933-2GH (3/95)
1995 Roth: Music Anima	American Gramophone (s/c) (F) AGCD801
1995 Sirbu: I Musici	Philips (M) 446 699-2PH (2/97 - nla)
1996 Von der Goltz: Freiburg Baroque Orch	DHM (M) 82876 60158-2
1996 Manze: Amsterdam Baroque Orch / Koopman	Warner Elatus (M) 0927 46726-2
1996 Zehetmair: Camerata Bern	Berlin Classics (M) 0115212BC
1997 Wallfisch: Australian Brandenburg Orch / Dyer	ABC Classics (F) ABC456 364-2
1997 Jacques Loussier Trio	Telarc (F) CD83417
1997 Palladian Ens (Chédeville: Les saisons amusantes)	Linn (F) CKD070 (1/98)
1999 Carmignola: Venice Baroque Orch / Marcon	Sony (F) SK51352 (11/00)
1999 Mutter: Trondheim Soloists	DG (F) 463 259-2GH (12/99)
2000 Kremer: Kremerata Baltica	Nonesuch (F) 7559 79568-2 (5/00)
2001 Guglielmo: Arte dell'Arco (Dresden version)	CPO (F) ④ CPO 777 037-2
2002 Azzaro, Ferreira, de Secondi, Vicari: Conc Italiano / Alessandrini	Naïve (F) OP30363 (8/03)
2003 Biondi: Europa Galante	Virgin (F) 545547-2 (3/04)
2004 Jansen: ens	Decca (F) 475 6293DH
2004 Kennedy: BPO	EMI (F) 557648-2
2004 Red Priest	Red Priest (F) RPO03
2002-03 Meier (elec gtr): Modern Gtr Orch	Centaur (F) CRC2686
2005 Huggett: Portland Baroque Orch	PBO (F) ② [no cat no]
2005 Tønnesen: Norwegian CO	Simax (F) PSC1247
2005 Laurin (rec): Arte dei Suonatori	BIS (F) ④ BIS-SACD1605
2008 Bell: ASMF	Sony (F) 88697 11013-2 (12/08)
2008 Parlement de Musique / Gester (Corrette: Laudate Dominum)	Ambrotonay (F) AMY014 (6/08)
2009 Martinson: Boston Baroque / Pearlman	Telarc (F) CD80698 (5/09)
2009 St John: Simón Bolívar Youth Orch, Venezuela / Marturet	Ancalagon (F) ④ ANC134





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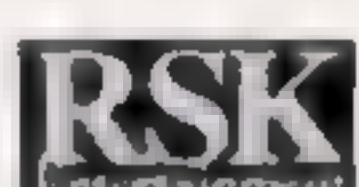
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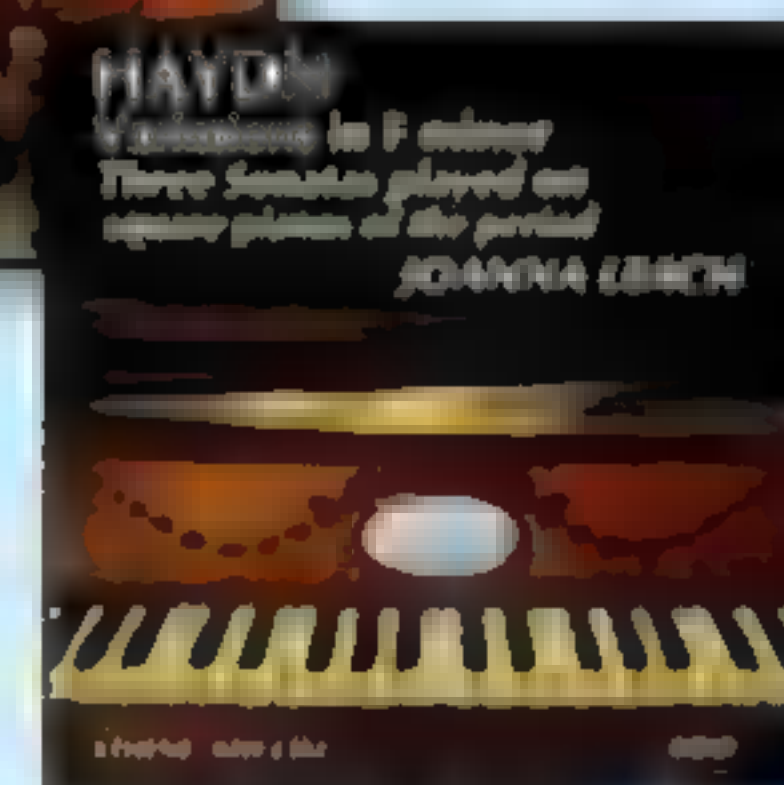
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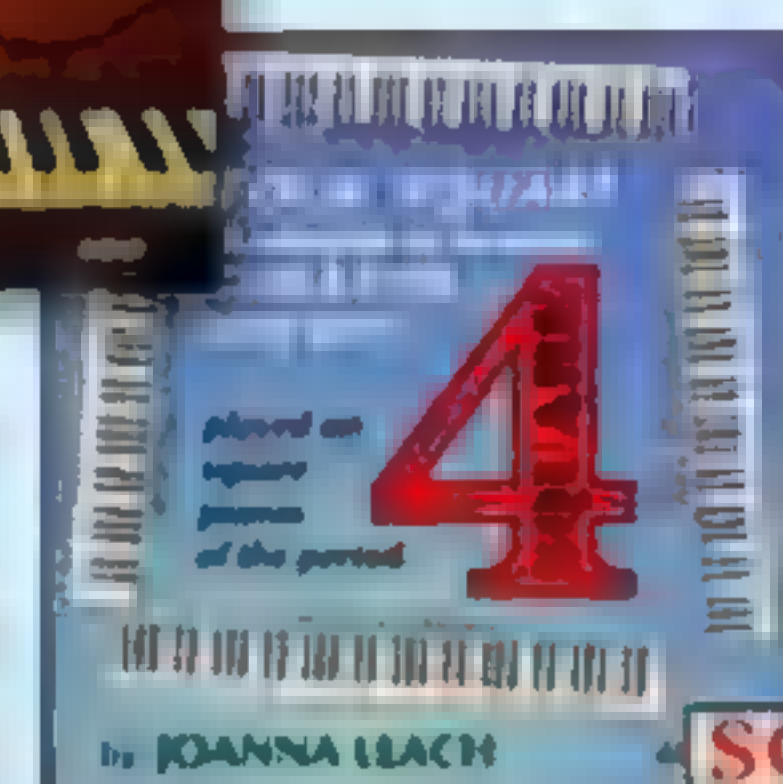
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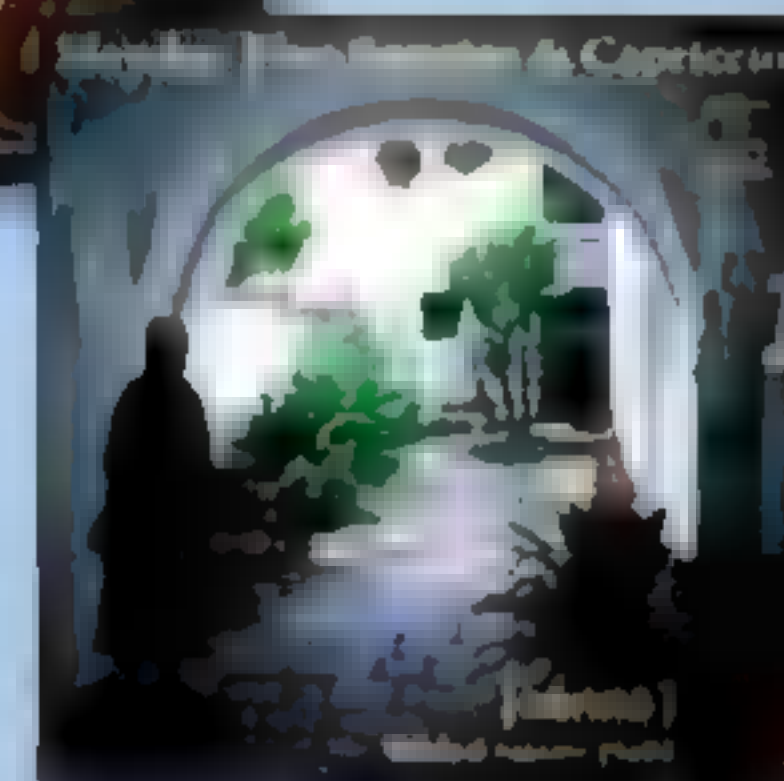
ATHCD6



Dussek: Duos and Sonatas with Derek Bell (harp)

ATHCD10

"excellent" - Early Music Guide



Haydn: Five Sonatas, etc

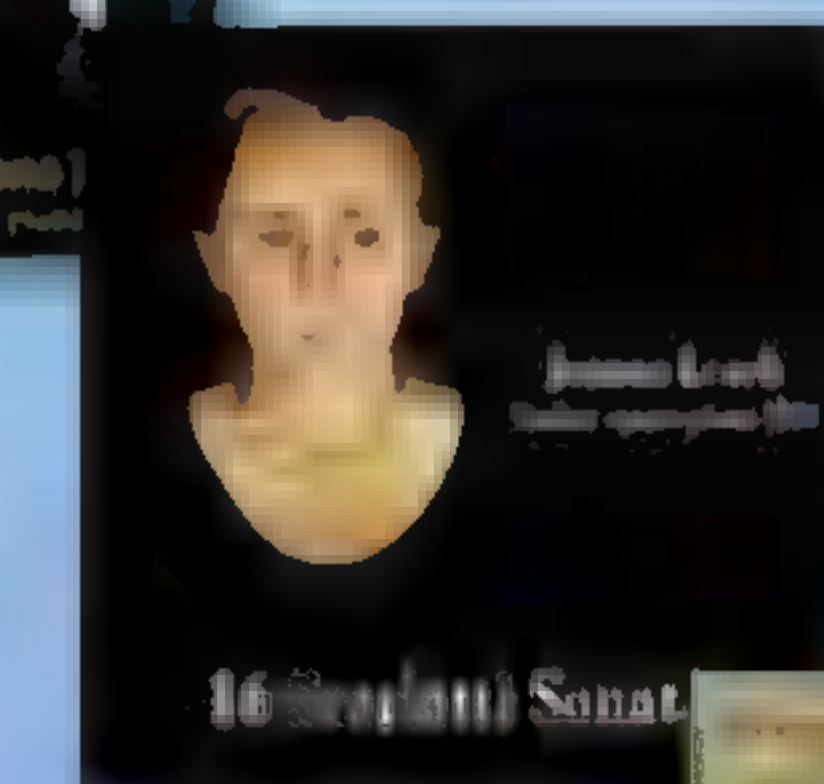
ATHCD22

"Characterful and tasteful" - Early Music News

Scarlatti: 16 Sonatas

ATH23025

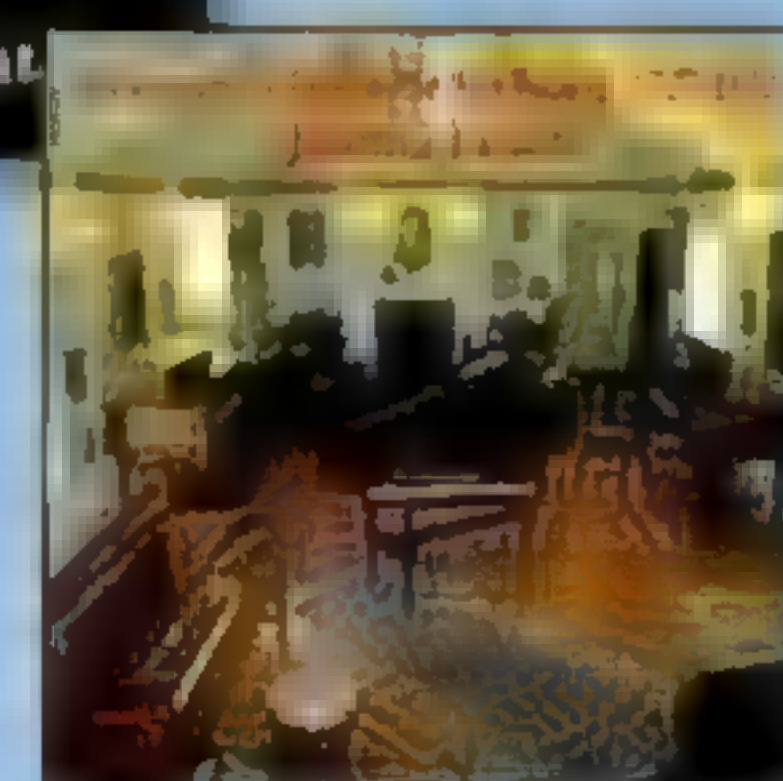
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Louis Kaufman and Henry Swoboda, champions of the then-unknown work

yet to sample a recording of the Rousseau (although at least one exists, by Mario Folena on Brilliant Classics).

One of the most bizarre (at least to our ears) contemporaneous arrangements of the work is *Les saisons amusantes* by Nicolas Chédeville (1705-82), with the musette taking on most of the solo work. The **Palladian Ensemble** has made its own arrangement of Chédeville's adaptation, adding a hurdy-gurdy to the mix and completing the band with violin, recorder, gamba, Baroque guitar, harpsichord and organ (1997). The beauty of this recording is its ability to fire the imagination with its more authentically rustic sounds, sending us back to Vivaldi's original work with fresh ears. Jean-Pierre Rasle on musette and Nigel Eaton on hurdy-gurdy have a ball, while the Palladians (with Richard Egarr on harpsichord and organ) provide a wealth of colours.

Still in the relatively authentic vein is the so-called "Dresden" version for strings and winds in a rip-roaring recording by **Federico Guglielmo** and L'Arte dell'Arco, and **Gottfried von der Goltz** and the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra joining forces with the Harp Consort under Andrew Lawrence-King. This has the added attraction of featuring recordings of the sonnets read in Italian, bringing to mind the otherwise unremarkable

recording by **Arnie Roth** and Musica Anima which features the rich baritone of actor Patrick Stewart in the sonnets.

Still on the right side of good taste are recorder player **Dan Laurin** and Arte dei Suonatori; Laurin exploits his instrument to its maximum potential, not only in the depiction of birdsong but in those wide interval leaps and fiendish runs representing the winds. Given its pastoral associations, the recorder also makes sense from a symbolic point of view. **James Galway** on modern flute with the Zagreb Soloists treads the same path and is, in his own way, just as satisfying.

Versions for two pianos, such as Almeida Prado's (recorded by **Fernando Corvisier** and **João Carlos Martins** for Labor Records), don't strike me as particularly successful, especially as played here; the version by the **Amsterdam Guitar Trio** is much more satisfying, if equally inauthentic.

Now things start to get a little weird, with versions for electric guitar ensemble (**Nicolas Meier** on Centaur), jazz trio (the **Jacques Loussier Trio** – who else? – on Telarc) and frankly bizarre arrangements that include the noises of a busy city while adding percussion (**Terje Tønnesen** and the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra on Simax) and the sounds of nature and instruments such as the hammer dulcimer, the bayan, tabla, tar,

## THE TOP CHOICE



**Giuliano Carmignola**, Venice Baroque Orchestra / **Andrea Marcon**

Sony © SK51352

Stylish, sophisticated and true both to Vivaldi and to our own time, this has it all. Avoiding the extremes of other Italian period performances, Carmignola nevertheless holds little in reserve, snapping back at, rather than riding out Marcon's audacious orchestral manoeuvres – but always with a smile on his face.

riqq, guitar, Celtic fiddle and Highland pipes as well as synthesiser (arranged by Viktoria Mushkatkol and Eric Lindert, released on Earthbeat! Records).

But strangest of all – and the most fun – is the madcap arrangement by **Red Priest** for recorder, cello, violin and harpsichord. As the booklet-note to the recording says, "Recognising that Vivaldi was a maverick and a showman (the John McEnroe of Baroque musicians, according to a leading Vivaldi scholar today) we have chosen in our version to cast aside the rulebook and let our imaginations run free – but always with the goal of bringing out Vivaldi's scene-painting as vividly as possible". And let their imaginations run free they do, with everything from rifles, snatches of *God Save the Queen* and fireside dreams of a Caribbean holiday thrown in. But, as always with Red Priest, the playing is extremely virtuoso, the musicianship sublime.

So yes: perhaps the real question is not which version of *The Four Seasons* to buy but how many. If I could have only one, and knowing that I'd have to live it for rest of my life, it would have to be Carmignola with the Venice Baroque Orchestra and Andrea Marcon. Because no other recording seems to make sense of Vivaldi's programmatic intentions in such a convincingly – and excitingly, not to mention movingly – contemporary fashion while still respecting the claims of history and convention. 🎧



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## Rachmaninov Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 4 Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

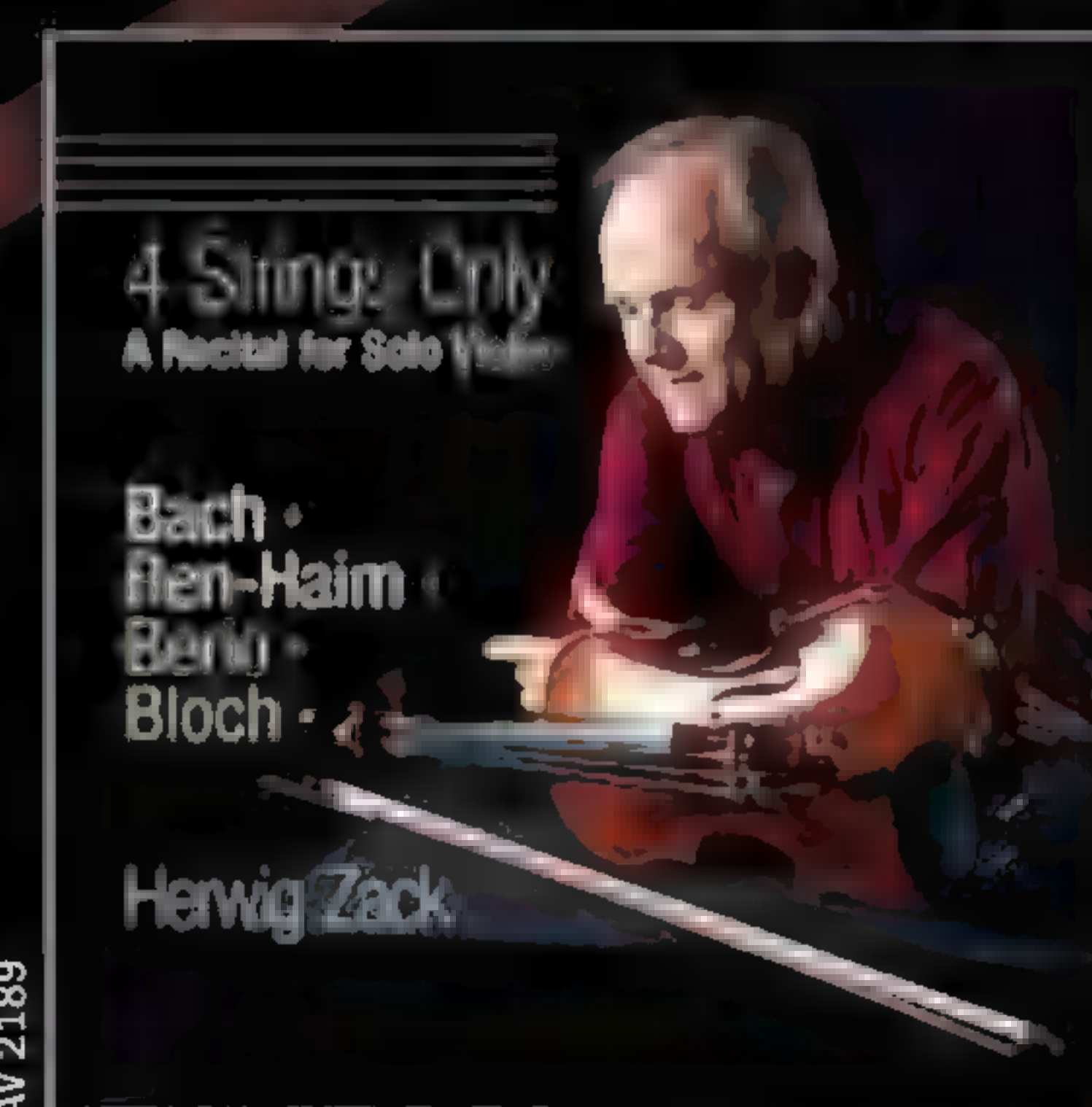
Simon Trpčeski, piano  
Vasily Petrenko, conductor  
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra



"Avie can certainly congratulate itself on having backed a winner ... Trpčeski was born to perform this music, and Petrenko to conduct it."  
- *The Daily Telegraph (UK), Classical CD of the Week*  
(on Rachmaninov Piano Concertos 2 and 3, AV 2192)

"another Milstein in the making ... most beautifully captured by Avie."  
- *MusicWeb International, Recording of the Month*  
(on Catala Complete Works for Violin and Piano, AV 2143)

## 4 Strings Only Works by J S Bach, Ben-Haim, Berio, Bloch Herwig Zack, violin



## Vivaldi: The French Connection 2

La Serenissima  
Adrian Chandler, violin / director



Adrian Chandler and La Serenissima follow their Gramophone Award-winning Vivaldi: The French Connection (AV 2178) with The French Connection 2, featuring the **world-premiere recording** of Il Gran Mogol, the recently rediscovered Vivaldi Flute Concerto.

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(on Fauré Complete Nocturnes, AV 2132)

## Fauré The Complete Barcarolles Trois Romances sans paroles Charles Owen, pian



## Hans Gál Symphony No. 3 \* Schumann Symphony No. 3 "Rhenish"

Kenneth Woods, conductor  
Orchestra of the Swan



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- *Gramophone*  
(on Gál Orchestral Works, AV 2146)

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- *Miami Herald*

## Harp Concertos by Páish Alvars, Albrechtsberger, Saint-Saëns Elizabeth Hainen, harp Rossen Milanov Bulgarian National Radio Orchestra





# GRAMOPHONE

# REVIEWS



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### KEY TO SYMBOLS

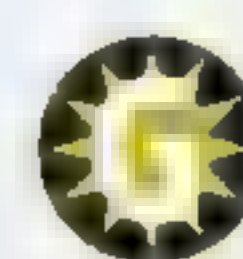
- Ⓜ Reissue
- Ⓜ Historic
- ② Compact disc (number of discs in set)
- T Text(s) included
- I translation(s) included
- S Synopsis included

- N Notes included
- s subtitles included
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- nla no longer available
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**Editor's Choice**  
See page 12



**Gramophone recommends**



Pay a visit to the *Gramophone Player* at [www.gramophone.co.uk](http://www.gramophone.co.uk) to hear excerpts from this month's Editor's Choice discs as well as other featured recordings



# Orchestral

More Haydn from Fey • Nino Rota without the films • Jurowski's Resurrection

## Brian

Concerto for Orchestra. English Suite No 3.  
Symphonies – No 10; No 30  
**Royal Scottish National Orchestra /**  
**Martyn Brabbins**  
Dutton Epoch © CDLX7267 (65' • DDD)

## Brian

'Orchestral Music, Vol 1'  
Burlesque Variations on an Original Theme.  
Elegy. English Suite No 5, 'Rustic Scenes'.  
Legend: Ave atque vale  
**BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra /**  
**Garry Walker**  
Toccata Classics © TOCC0110 (63' • DDD)

*Burlesque Variations – comparative version:*

*City of Hull Youth SO, Heald-Smith (CAME) CC9014CD-2*

### Superb additions to the burgeoning Havergal Brian discography



These are heady times for Brianophiles with a spate of new recordings and comparative versions. So it is here, with premieres of *Ave atque vale* (1968), Concerto (1964), Elegy (1954), Third *English Suite* (1919–21) and Symphony No 30 (1967), and first professional recordings of *Burlesque Variations* (1903), Fifth *English Suite* (1953) and Tenth Symphony (1953–54).

The Tenth is a talismanic work, the first commercially issued (by the Leicestershire Schools SO conducted by James Loughran on Unicorn – nla), its sessions featured in an Aquarius TV documentary aired just before the composer's death in 1972. The RSNO's playing is stronger and Dutton's recording state-of-the-art, making this the first choice. While Loughran arguably makes more of the Tenth's volatile profile, pushing and pulling the tempi, Brabbins's is straighter and tauter, cutting almost two minutes off the duration. After 39 years of Loughran's, though, it takes some getting used to.

Brabbins's direct approach suits the couplings, producing splendid accounts of the Third *English Suite* (coeval with the *Gothic* Symphony and surprisingly pastoral in places) and the orchestral Concerto. But the

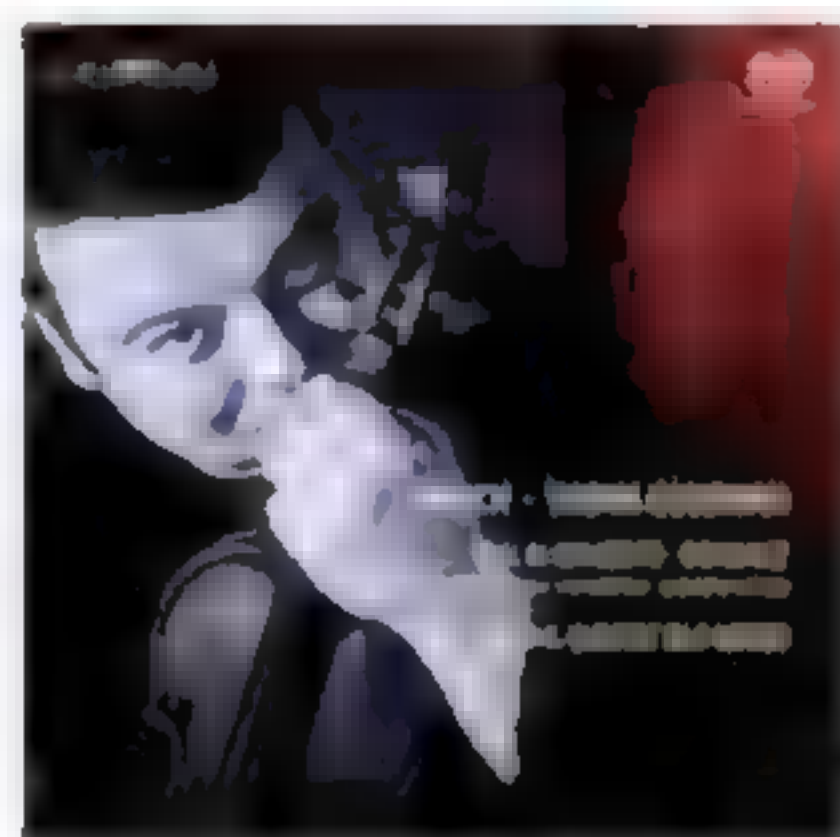
Thirtieth Symphony is the pinnacle of Dutton's disc; an extraordinarily compelling polyphonic fantasy, one of Brian's finest inspirations, punching far above its relatively modest weight and compellingly interpreted.

The works on Toccata Classics' issue cover the full breadth of Brian's orchestral career, featuring his earliest surviving orchestral score, the *Burlesque Variations*, and his penultimate work, *Ave atque vale*. The former is a touch uncharacteristic and lies squarely within the English tradition, curiously for a composer with such a reputation as a maverick. The BBC Scottish SO's playing is, not surprisingly, considerably stronger than the City of Hull Youth SO's, with Walker's shaping more telling than Heald-Smith's. Matters are closer in the final *English Suite*; the Leicestershire Schools SO account (conducted by Eric Pinkett), issued by CBS on LP, stands up well but Walker's outpoints it. The suite possesses a subtlety belying the picturesque titles of its four movements or the whole, *Rustic Scenes*: "Reverie" for strings has a depth making it one of Brian's deepest yet most appealing inspirations, succeeded by the delightfully relaxed *scherzo*, "The Restless Stream". *Elegy* and *Ave atque vale* also receive committed performances, caught in excellent sound, too. Both discs are highly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

## Bruch

Violin Concerto No 1, Op 26<sup>a</sup>. Romance, Op 85<sup>a</sup>. String Quintet, Op *posth*<sup>b</sup>  
**Vadim Gluzman, <sup>b</sup>Sandis Šteinbergs *vns***  
**<sup>b</sup>Maxim Rysanov, <sup>b</sup>Ilze Klava *vas***  
**<sup>b</sup>Reinis Birznies *vc* <sup>a</sup>Bergen Philharmonic**  
**Orchestra / Andrew Litton**  
BIS © BIS-SACD1852 (58' • DDD/DSD)

### Bruch's late chamber music shows little advance on his much-loved concerto



Between 1918 and his death two years later, the octogenarian Bruch, in a final burst of creativity, wrote two string quintets and an octet. The A minor Quintet has a particularly fine first movement. What is most surprising, however, is that Bruch's style has not moved on from the G minor Concerto, written 50 years previously.

This performance of the Quintet is robust and confident. High-powered playing and a

resonant recording combine to create an almost orchestral sound. Vadim Gluzman plays the finale's virtuoso passages magnificently but I find, in the lyrical stretches of this movement and in the *Adagio*, that intense tone, with fast vibrato and much bow pressure, works against a musical style that is generally quite simple and serene.

I prefer this account of the Concerto to the recent recording by Daniel Hope (DG, 5/11), mainly because Gluzman and Litton are more alive to the desirability of maintaining a sense of momentum. It's a performance with wonderful moments – for example the turn to G flat in the *Adagio* (track 2, 4'17") – and Gluzman has a bold, thrilling way with the brilliant passages. But I do feel that the concerto sounds most beautiful when the soloist has a purer, clearer tone, like Erica Morini's in 1960 (DG Originals). Her calmer, less pressured approach makes it easier to convey the music's emotional ebb and flow.

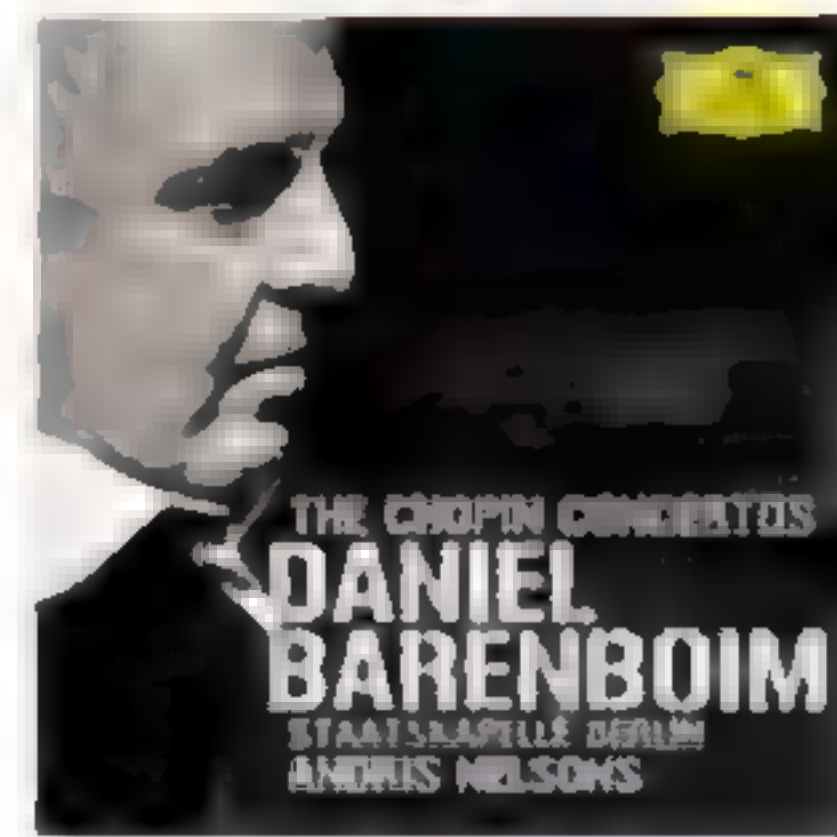
The Romance, another late work, was originally for viola. Bruch himself provided the alternative violin part and Gluzman's performance is thoroughly pleasing. However, the music does appear more distinctive on the larger instrument, as on Yuri Bashmet's (RCA). **Duncan Druce**

## Chopin

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 11; No 2, Op 21  
**Daniel Barenboim *pf***  
**Berlin Staatskapelle / Andris Nelsons**  
DG © 477 9520GH (74' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Essen, July 2010

### Barenboim has much to say in his first recording of the two Chopin concertos



We rarely hear Barenboim play Chopin so here is something fresh. The two concertos hold their place as great works in spite of being habitually patronised for their orchestral component, which is regarded by many as a decorative adjunct to what the soloist does, nothing more. Barenboim would disagree and proposes instead a role for the pianist in dialogue with the orchestra, which is certainly more interesting, and I'm sure he has a point. The results seem to me to restore to the compositions a strength and dignity that have often been obscured.

Nothing he does can alter the fact that the





bulk of the *tutti* passages and accompaniments give the orchestra little chance to shine – granted that some of the wind instruments have their moments. But it has beautiful music to play and to present, in the first movements, before the piano appears; what a world of difference it makes to have this cared for and brought forth with the beauty of sound and amplitude of dynamic life that we expect from the soloist. For short samples try the opening of the slow movements – for the muted *pianissimo* string sound in the First Concerto, exquisitely modulated here and given an almost speaking quality, and at the start of the Second's *Larghetto* for the alternation of strings with woodwind in the two balancing phrases which Nelsons and the players project with exceptional eloquence. Scene-setting is all it may be, but did these passages ever sound so good?

Barenboim, no shrinking violet, is upfront in the picture and yet such details as the obbligato bassoon (in both first movements) sing out without highlighting and the natural concert-hall balances work well. His amplitude of phrasing and dynamics, matched by the orchestra's, is in place as a response to the pageantry and flow of events that is unceasingly generous. You could say the playing is big, but what is predominant is its authority. It is sure in purpose and the many passing delights are perceived as part of a larger scheme of embellishment and commentary. In harmony, too, are rigour and spontaneity, exemplified by Barenboim's handling of *tempo rubato*, which arises like an added dimension to the expression, free as air, within the bounds of the musical form and the basic pulse. You would expect a man who gets this sort of thing right in Mozart to get it right in Chopin, too.

If you put the piano-playing under a microscope and are the kind of listener who likes virtuosity to be drilled to within an inch of its life, you can find a few moments where finish and stability are less than perfect. After several listenings they don't bother me. If I filter out the pianism for consideration I would say that I've rarely heard Barenboim play so well. But it's his qualities of insight and distinction in the musical control of these beautiful pieces that carry the day, and in that regard it seems to me they have rarely been served so well. He has much to say about them and here is a delightful addition to their recorded history. **Stephen Plaistow**

## Gál · Schubert

'Kindred Spirits'

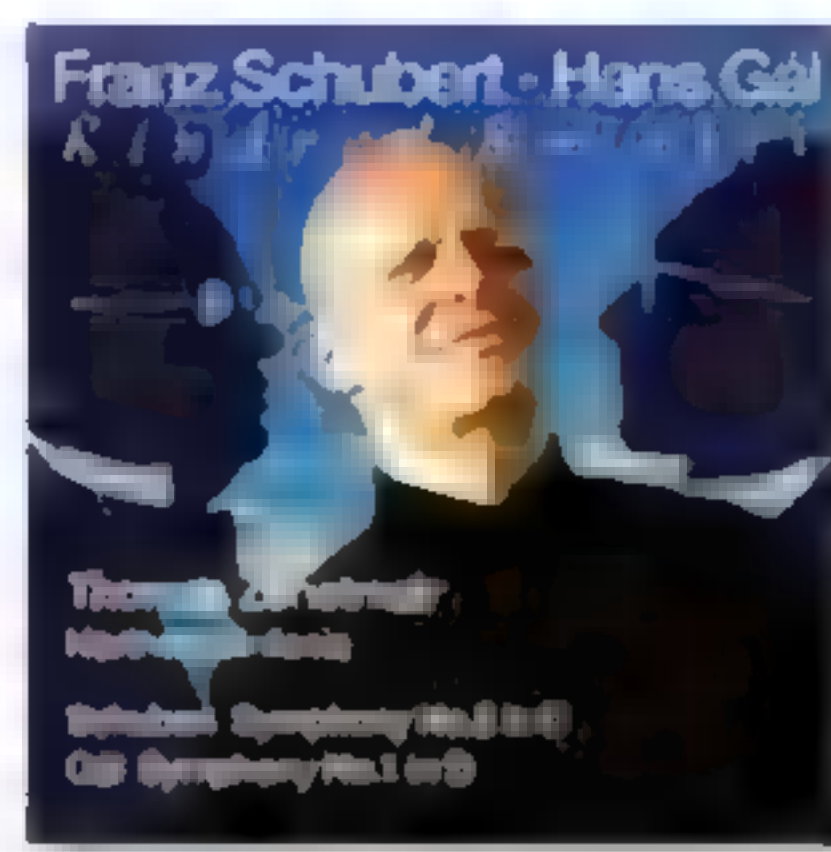
Gál Symphony No 1, Op 30

Schubert Symphony No 6, D589

Northern Sinfonia / Thomas Zehetmair

Avie © AV2224 (62' • DDD)

**Two symphonies written a century apart, with classical order and romantic soul**



Hans Gál entered his First Symphony in a worldwide competition for works celebrating the 1928 centenary of Schubert's death. Gál was pipped at the post in the Austrian section by Franz Schmidt's Third Symphony but the juxtaposition of Gál and Schubert on this Northern Sinfonia disc is a happy one. The orchestral playing in Schubert's "Little" C major Symphony of 1817-18 is crisp of rhythm, lucid of texture and both warm and spirited in expression. The Viennese character of the symphony is aglow throughout ■ performance in which Thomas Zehetmair finds a mellifluous way of shaping melody while keeping the momentum virile and the music buoyant. The contrasts and correspondences between the *Andante's* lyrical opening and its brisker central passage are executed with special deftness but the entire performance exudes a genuine delight in Schubert's palette of orchestral colours.

Gál's First Symphony, completed in 1927, represents the Viennese tradition of a century later, an age of liquid harmony and, as exemplified by the odd Expressionist touch in the otherwise subdued first movement (originally entitled "Idyll"), an intensity of emotion. Gál's roots were firmly planted in the soil of Brahms and Strauss. A classical sense of order was allied to a romantic soul, with no hint that he was in any way seduced by Schoenberg. Zehetmair's admirably structured account of the First Symphony and the Northern Sinfonia's luminous playing of it highlight a (then young) composer who had something to say and voiced it with sensibility and conviction. **Geoffrey Norris**

## Haydn

Symphonies – No 53, 'L'imperiale'

(with two versions of finale); No 54

Heidelberg Symphony Orchestra / Thomas Fey

Hänssler Classic © CD98 626 (62' • DDD)

**Plenty to discuss, but still not the 'L'imperiale' we could be hearing**



Adjacent numerically, these two symphonies were composed some years apart (No 54, 1774; No 53, c1777-79). And, while *L'imperiale* has attracted the attention of conductors ranging from Stokowski to Kuijken, the G major was hitherto unavailable on CD outside the complete recorded cycles. That's a pity, as it's by no means an inferior work, with a driving, horn-led first movement and an *Adagio assai* of considerable beauty. Trumpets, drums and a slow introduction add a ceremonial sheen which Fey naturally doesn't undersell, although these were later additions and it's

instructive to dig out, if you can, Christopher Hogwood's recording of the original version (L'Oiseau-Lyre, 5/98 – nla), free from the weight of the added brass.

No 53 is a potpourri work, assembled from different sources, and there is a choice of finales. Fey presents "Version A", a quirky capriccio, but as an appendix offers "Version B", identical in all but scoring to the Overture Hobla/7, which, to add to the confusion, was also pressed into action in slightly varied form as the opening movement of Symphony No 62. Stokowski (Cala, 11/02) prefers "Version C", almost certainly not by Haydn, while the Dorati set contains Versions A, B, C and "D", another D major overture. We will be testing you on this later.

Fey's usual idiosyncrasies are in place: you may find the look-at-me ornamentation wearying in the slow movement of No 53; he falls prey to Adám Fischer's single-strings tendency in that of No 54; once again he's happy to let brass and drums pad out their parts. Radio 3 (on behalf of the EBU) broadcast a fantastic performance of No 53 by the Berlin Akademie für Alte Musik on the anniversary of Haydn's death in 2009: would that Harmonia Mundi would issue that! Fey's performances always leave me breathless, seldom less than invigorated, often infuriated, and it'll be fascinating to hear how he measures up when only the less outgoing symphonies are left to be recorded.

**David Thresher**

## Liszt

'The Sound of Weimar, Vol 1'

A Dante Symphony, S109.

A la Chapelle Sixtine, R445

Chorus Sine Nomine (women's voices);

Vienna Academy Orchestra / Martin Haselböck

NCA © 60234 (59' • DDD)

*Dante Sym – selected comparison:*

BBC PO, Noseda (8/09) (CHAN) CHAN10524

Netherlands PO, Haenchen (CAPR) CAP 10 736

**Liszt on instruments of the period and an auspicious start to a new series**



There can be little doubt that Martin Haselböck hears his Liszt from the organ loft. His five-CD set of the organ works (NCA) attests to both musical perception and scholarship, and I'm fairly certain that his approach to the complete orchestral works, of which this is the first volume, will find him a thoughtful and imaginative proponent of Liszt's revolutionary language. He locates quite a few similarities between Liszt's orchestrations and the organ registrations that he indicated for the extant instruments by his own organ builder Ladegast. There's a darkness of timbre common to both. The "period" element (using 19th-century



## Orchestral reviews

instruments and authentic forces) is obvious right from the *Dante Symphony*'s dramatic "Inferno" opening, the brush of dark-grain string tone and the explosively crescendoing timpani and tam-tam.

For the insistent main body of the movement, Haselböck opts for a gruelling, steady pulse, though he's more willing to bend the line than Gianandrea Noseda is on his leaner, more classically fashioned reading with the BBC Philharmonic. So often in this work, the brass dominate – as they mostly do on Hartmut Haenchen's exciting 1995 "live" Netherlands Philharmonic recording, identically coupled. Under Haselböck brass and strings are better integrated and individual detail is more subtly illuminated. Note in particular the ethereal, harp-led arabesques at 7'18" (prophetic of both Sibelius and Rachmaninov), and the plaintive clarinet tone that takes over soon afterwards. At 16'05", cavorting clarinets and stopped horns make a striking impression, and, when the big drums return a couple of minutes later, their effect is overwhelming.

The aching modulations of "Purgatorio" are made all the more ghostly by a relative lack of vibrato from the strings (at 4'43", listen to how the clarinet underpins the texture, and to the solemnity of the fugue soon afterwards, so reminiscent of Berlioz's much earlier *Romeo et Juliette*). Haenchen's more conventionally expressive approach leaves a quite different impression, sweeter but less disquieting. Haselböck's account of the "Magnificat" has a radiance about it that sets the scene for the astonishing second work on the disc, the haunting *A la Chapelle Sixtine*, a melding of Allegri's *Miserere* and the late *Ave verum corpus* by Mozart, who many years earlier had committed Allegri's work to memory. The orchestral version is among the most original and moving of Liszt's compositions, and Haselböck offers a most beautiful performance of it.

An auspicious start, then, to what should prove an important new series, a valid overview and an interesting alternative to the more weighted, modern-instrument options provided by the likes of Masur, Haitink, Karajan and the unstintingly passionate Nikolai Golovanov – though none of the aforementioned offers as comprehensive an overview as that Haselböck is planning for us.

**Rob Cowan**

### Maderna

'Complete Works for Orchestra, Vol 3'

*Ausstrahlung*<sup>a</sup>. Biogramma. Grande Aulodia<sup>b</sup>

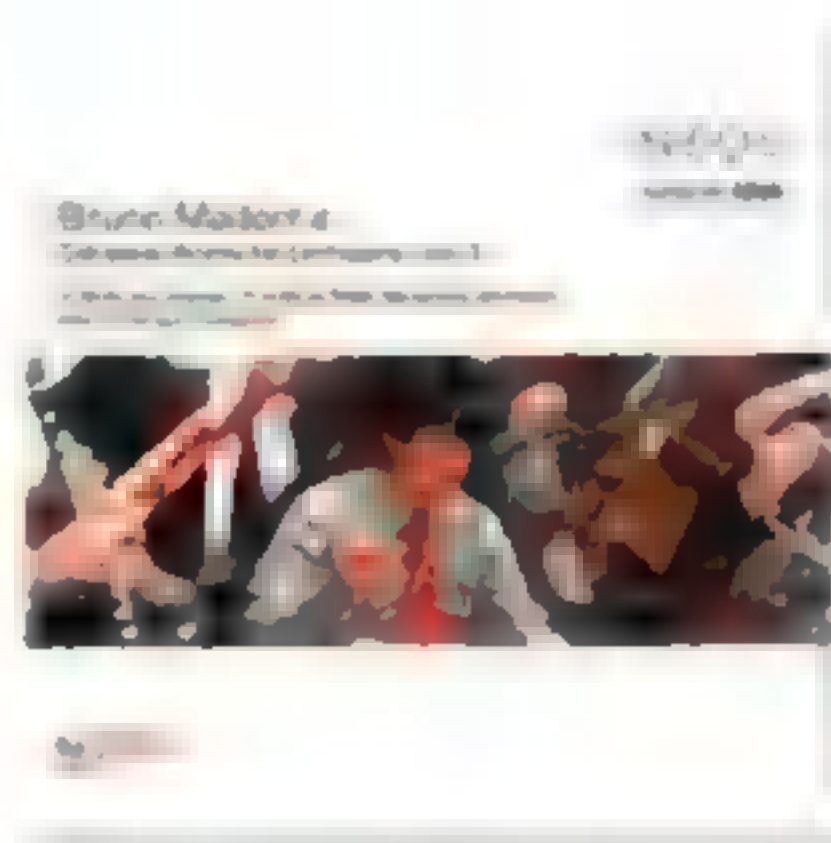
<sup>a</sup>Carole Sidney Louis *sop* <sup>ab</sup>Thaddeus Watson *fl*

<sup>ab</sup>Michael Sieg *ob* Frankfurt Radio Symphony

Orchestra / Arturo Tamayo

Neos Ⓢ NEOS10935 (73' • DDD • T)

**Maderna's hyper-collages  
create inscrutable sonic vistas**



Arturo Tamayo has recorded Bruno Maderna's *Ausstrahlung* before, for the Col Legno label in 1990, and because *Ausstrahlung*'s form is defined by the conductor – seven free-standing modules are assembled from the podium – it would be reasonable enough to expect subsequent performances to be radically different, especially as some modules are spiked with aleatoric unknowns. But Maderna's authorial voice never falters. The flow of material and conceptual largesse is entirely him, sucking finer details into a volatile hyper-collage that is as much "composed of" as composed.

*Ausstrahlung* (1971) is "a journey through the literary and spiritual history of Persia... based on ancient writings, in their original languages and in translation", scored for a suitably Cecil B DeMille-scale line-up of three soloists – female voice, flute, oboe – with large orchestra and pre-recorded tape. Maderna's patchwork of folded-together modules is arguably a more sophisticated approach to evoking history than narrative structure, which, by definition, imposes literary orderliness over temporal chaos. Carole Sidney Louis's declamatory expression of text is not particularly to my taste but the information overload triggered by Maderna's simultaneously brewing music, bilingual texts and electronics adds up to an attractively inscrutable sonic vista.

*Biogramma*'s reputation was secured by Giuseppe Sinopoli's classic 1979 recording (DG, 9/88). As in *Ausstrahlung*, sounds find their form as the music progresses, rather than having form imposed upon them (the same is true for *Grande Aulodia*). Maderna-istas will always have a soft spot for Sinopoli but Tamayo's ear for how the fragments inform the whole is on the button, and those glowing strings, and the soulful extended cor anglais solo, mean this is the *Biogramma* of choice. **Philip Clark**

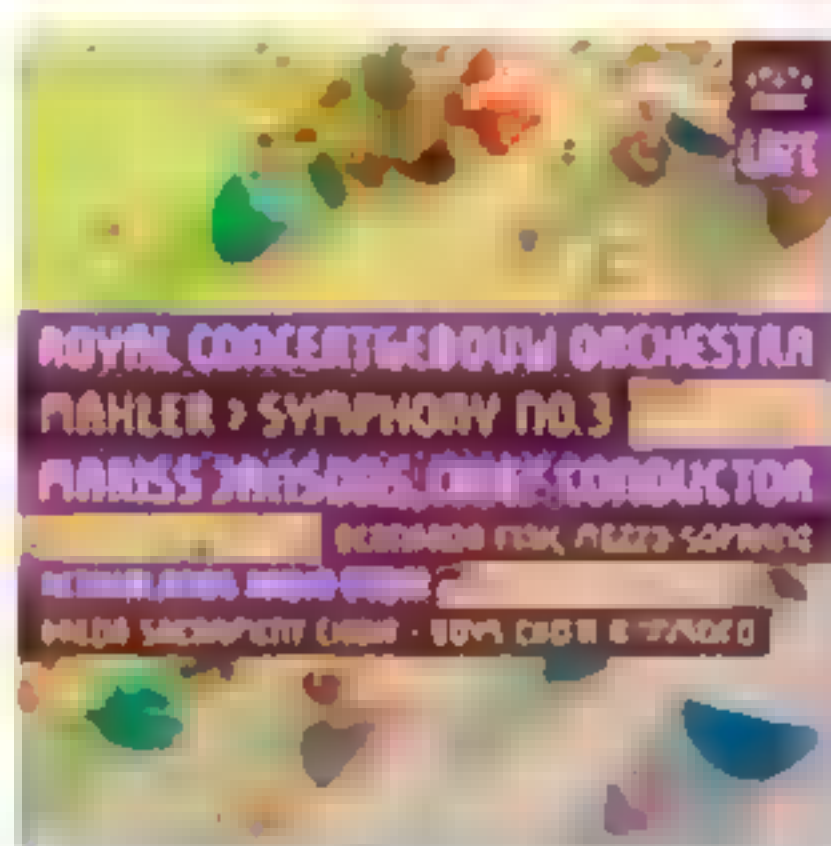
### Mahler

Symphony No 3

**Bernarda Fink** *mez* Netherlands Radio Choir;  
Rijnmond Boys' Choir; Boys of the Breda  
Sacraments Choir; Royal Concertgebouw  
Orchestra / Mariss Jansons

RCO Live Ⓢ RCO10004 (99' • DDD/DSD • T/t)

**A Mahler Third from Mariss Jansons in  
Amsterdam that looks on the bright side**



David Gutman summed up this partnership's Fifth Symphony (12/08) as "sophisticated, civilised and meticulous; what's missing is a certain edgy intensity". That hasn't always been true of Jansons's Mahler. A Sixth

on LSO Live (10/03) is huge and relentless. A broadcast of the Third from concerts last winter with the Bavarian Radio Symphony (his "other" orchestra) resisted this performance's tendency always to look on the bright side.

It's no use looking to the score to see what the Concertgebouw do differently – nothing out of the way, only exceptional fidelity (hardly exceptional in Mahler any more), softened slightly by an easing into different subject areas where there's an invitation to present rude and bare contrasts. Quiet dynamic markings are scrupulously heeded, lending a Humperdinckian charm to its revels and linking the symphony to the German *Wald*, the lost world of magic and unreality – if, that is, you see *Hansel and Gretel* as a fairy story and not an allegory of child abuse.

The first movement opens up as a carnival of the animals, and why not, but we're more used to them running riot while their keepers flee in panic. The *Wunderhorn* allusions in the third movement (to donkeys and asses of all species) are deliciously pointed, gracefully eliding their sardonic textual commentary. As so often happens in performance, the contralto introduces a gravity and focus hitherto elusive, but Bernarda Fink and the cor anglais could have been granted more space to let the world stand still and listen to the composer's heartfelt but bizarre misreading of Nietzsche. It's about the only tempo miscalculation in this impeccably plotted execution. In 1909 Mahler lamented to Bruno Walter, "Woe betide him if it happens that life and dream flow into one." There's no danger of that here. **Peter Quantrill**

### Rota

Concerto soirée<sup>a</sup>. Divertimento concertante<sup>b</sup>.

Symphony No 3

<sup>b</sup>David Botto *db* <sup>a</sup>Barry Douglas *pf*

Filarmonica '900 del Teatro Regio, Turin /  
Gianandrea Noseda

Chandos Ⓢ CHAN10669 (62' • DDD)

**Chandos's latest Rota anthology  
serves up a cornucopia of delights**



If you only know the music of Nino Rota from his masterly contributions to a whole string of classic movies (among them Fellini's *La strada*, *La dolce vita* and 8½, Visconti's *The Leopard* and Coppola's *The Godfather*), then Chandos's ongoing exploration of his concert works may well come as something of a revelation. The *Concerto soirée* for piano and orchestra, completed in 1961 and first performed in September of the following year with the composer himself as soloist, comprises a wonderfully entertaining sequence of five dance movements, all couched in a gratifyingly approachable, tuneful idiom and containing two actual quotations from Rota's





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Finally a Resurrection to prompt superlatives



Paying dividends:  
Vladimir Jurowski  
inspires his LPO

## Mahler

Symphony No 2, 'Resurrection'

Adriana Kučerová *sop* Christianne Stotijn *mez*  
London Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra /  
Vladimir Jurowski

LPO © 2 LPO0054 (83' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London,  
September 25-26, 2009



A performance of revelations, big and small, and easily the most illuminating to have appeared on disc in a very long time.

Jurowski wipes the floor with the recent Rattle and Jansons accounts and is probably now the prime recommendation, the "library" choice, that has for so long eluded us. And I include the excellent Ivan Fischer account on Channel Classics in that assessment. I was present at *this* live performance, what was a momentous evening at the Royal Festival Hall in September 2009 but wondered how it might translate to disc in the cool light of day. So often musical occasions writ large in one's memory achieve optimum impact only in the moment of performance and pale on reproduction and repetition. Not so, this *Resurrection*.

The really big factor here is Jurowski's command of Mahler's very particular and very dramatic way with *rubato* and the shock of newness that comes from those explicit

extremes. The urgency of the opening *Allegro maestoso* (the emphasis, unlike Rattle, on the *allegro*) is strikingly underlined with the premature arrival of the lyric second subject where Jurowski's emphasis on the agitated bass-line has an edge-of-seat disquiet. When the music does settle – the balmy second subject now shyly reappearing – the effect is doubly magical. Weight in Jurowski's reading does not necessarily mean sheer heft but rather the breadth of those big expansive *ritenutos* and *tenutos*. Rarely have I heard the wild neurotic contrasts in this music more scrupulously and uncompromisingly realised: emphatic *marcatos*, wild *accelerandos* so sudden and unexpected that you reach for the score for confirmation and then wonder why so many conductors downplay or simply ignore them.

So many moments in this first movement sound renewed: the grisly tread of string basses marking the approach to the climax of the development; the electrifying *col legno* passage, like the beating wings of the angel of death, so deliberate as to accentuate the sudden rush to the precipice (note: no *ritardando*) and the terrifying reiteration of that ugly stack of notes marking the point of no return. Then that beautiful passage in *portamento*-festooned strings demonstrating just how far the LPO have come under Jurowski's directorship.

A strange distracted elegance marks the second movement, with the restless string

ostinato and especially the entry of the string basses serving to remind us that this is no mere diversion but rather an ironic variant, the flip-side, if you like, of the first movement. The *pizzicato* return has a sinister charm, a deliberation, which suggests a different kind of march – the elfin variety. And that ironic rusticity proceeds in the vividly projected third movement with its quirky country dance in fiddle and flute, and delicious Trio in close-harmony trumpets. The climaxes again romp forwards with precipitous abandon while the soft, still, maternal voice of Christianne Stotijn seems to emerge supernaturally from the final tam-tam stroke.

The finale is tremendous and highly theatrical, with spatial effects beautifully managed in a hall not noted for its accommodation of acoustical special effects. The anticipation of the silence before the brass chorale deliver the *Dies irae* is heart-stopping, as is the hair-raising climax setting the offstage band on a collision course with the orchestra. You might quibble that the soprano soloist, Adriana Kučerová, is set too close for that magical separation from the chorus but the whole final paragraph is thrilling, with Mahler's returning Resurrection hymn phrased with urgency and uplift. You may think you know how Mahler's Second Symphony goes. Think again.

Edward Seckerson



BEETHOVENFEST BONN 9.9. – 9.10. 2011



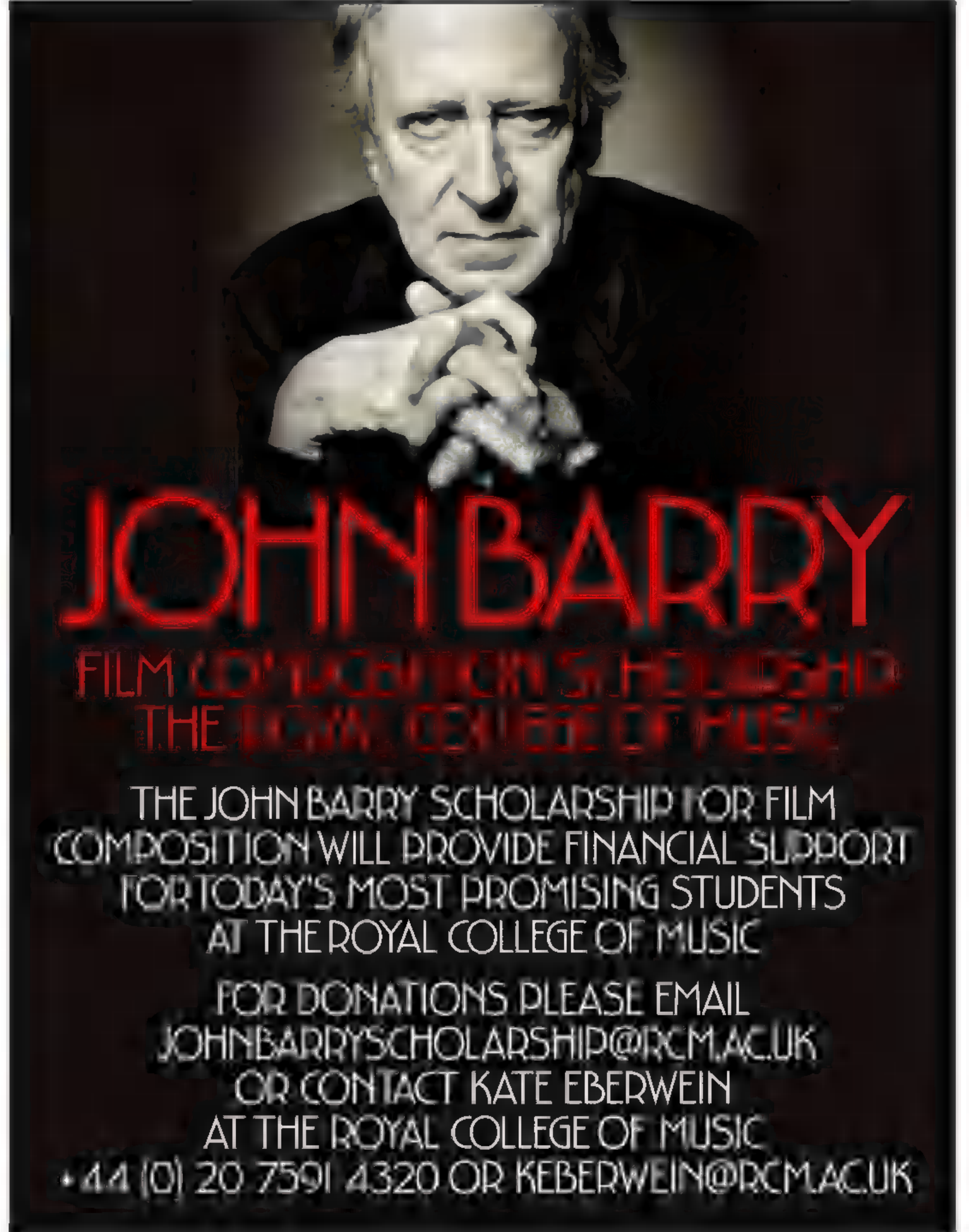
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scores for *La strada* and 8½ in the ravishing central “Romanza” and perky concluding “Can-can” respectively. Written between 1968 and 1973, the *Divertimento concertante* (effectively a concerto for double bass and orchestra) proves another readily assimilable and rewarding offering, the solo instrument’s nonchalant acrobatics never failing to raise a grin. At the same time, there’s no missing the depth of feeling underpinning the slow-movement “Aria”, whose songful main theme eventually blossoms to gorgeous effect (beam to 4’22” to hear what I mean).

Best of all, however, is the Third Symphony (1956-57), an immaculately crafted four-movement essay in the form with not one wasted note throughout its 18-minute duration, and (once again) boasting a slow movement of genuinely touching eloquence. It’s a captivating score which I’ve already replayed a number of times and surely merits programming as a refreshing alternative to, say, Prokofiev’s indestructible *Classical* Symphony, whose elegant demeanour and freewheeling spirit it perhaps most closely resembles.

Gianandrea Noseda secures a highly sympathetic set of performances, his Turin forces responding in consistently heartwarming and agreeably spick-and-span fashion. Both soloists, too, acquit themselves with distinction, and the sound has the natural presence, bloom and transparency we have come to expect from Chandos.

Cordially recommended. **Andrew Achenbach**

## Schoenberg · Tchaikovsky

**Schoenberg** Variations for Orchestra, Op 31

**Tchaikovsky** Symphony No 6, ‘Pathétique’, Op 74

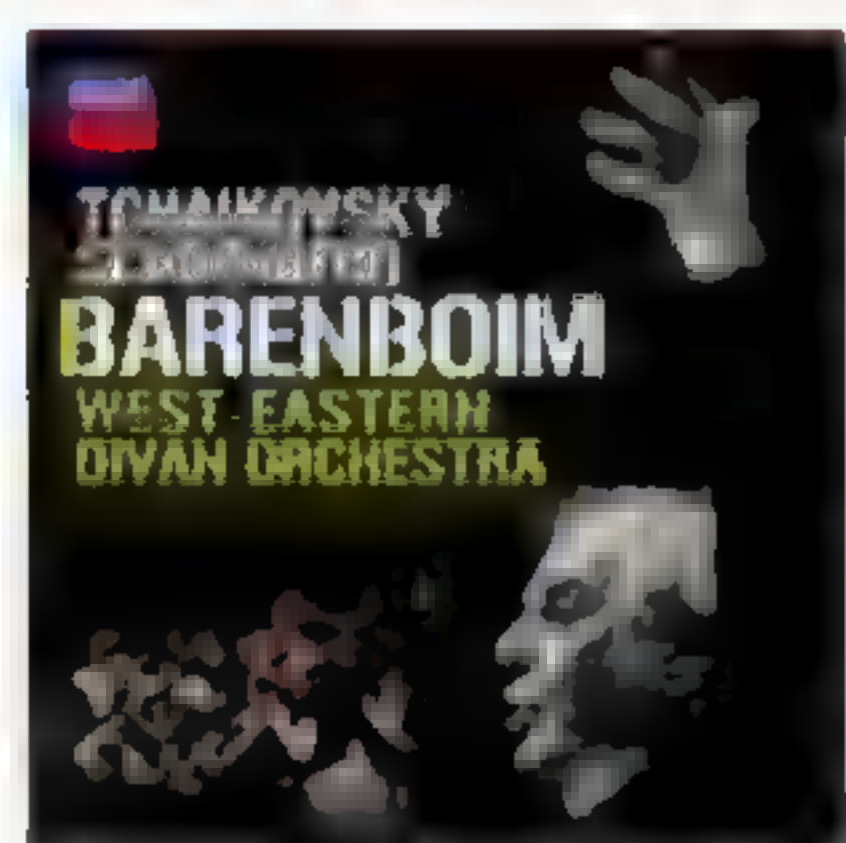
West-Eastern Divan Orchestra /

Daniel Barenboim

Decca © 478 2719DH (69’ • DDD)

Recorded live at the Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, August 13, 2007

**Seductive Schoenberg but Barenboim offers a manufactured Pathétique**



The beauty is in the complexity of Schoenberg’s Variations for Orchestra and nobody knows this piece better than Daniel Barenboim. I well remember an illustrated introduction he gave prior to a performance in London in which he expressed the wish that we might listen with fresh ears to a work that our parents and grandparents before them hoped never to have to hear again.

Now, with his West-Eastern Divan Orchestra on cracking form, this most bejewelled of scores plays hide-and-seek with the theme in ways that consistently tantalise the ear and, surprisingly, engage the emotions

almost before the realisation registers. The beauty, the poignancy, the drama here is fleeting and what impresses most of all is the deftness and piquancy of passing inflections. It’s the kind of performance that has one thinking in terms of “exquisite” rather than “challenging” – which offers a kind of intellectual romanticism where the intricacy of the texturing is in itself seductive.

Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony is, of course, a more “overt” emotional experience but actually, in Barenboim’s account, far less satisfying. The playing is still pretty fabulous, with a corporate string sound smouldering in its intensity. But Barenboim is apt to tease every last drop of expression from every last note to the point at which everything becomes subsumed by an all-pervasive *sostenuto*. That, of course, is thrilling as the first movement development spills over into the darkest saturation of string sound imaginable. But because the development is launched at so deliberate a pace, and because rhythm here and elsewhere (not least the third-movement march) lacks keenness, the whole performance feels over-emphatic and indulgent.

There are revealing moments where a slight shift of emphasis proves harmonically illuminating and unexpected but, at the same time, Barenboim’s phrasal and dynamic nuancing can seem overly precious, with solo winds on a couple of occasions almost failing to speak in their search for the ultimate *pianissimo*. The heart of the second movement (a rather sedate *Allegro con grazia*) becomes cloying and sentimental, a whisker away from self-pity. As for the great *Adagio lamentoso*, the wash of string sound seems momentarily to emulate the “Mantovani effect” and it is hard to be moved by something which sounds so manufactured to elicit our sympathy.

**Edward Seckerson**

## Schubert

Symphony No 9, ‘Great’, D944. Five German Dances and Seven Trios with Coda, D89

Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer

Channel Classics © CCSSA31111 (70’ • DDD/DSD)

Symphony – selected comparison:

Bamberg SO, Nott (8/07) (TUDO) TUDOR7144

**A serious but considered and imposing reading of Schubert’s ‘Great’ C major**



To begin, Iván Fischer uses natural horns, which means that some notes have to be stopped; you’ll recognise them by their slightly “sneery” timbre. And that changes the character of the opening theme. Absent is the calming, even tone of valve horns. But then, Fischer doesn’t offer a tranquil view of this introductory *Andante*. It’s uneasy, the brass interjections militant rather

**Belshazzar**  
GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL  
by **René Jacobs**

**BELSHAZZAR**  
RENE JACOBS  
CHRISTOPH MEYER  
DIRECTOR OF THE GUSTAV MAJER

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BEL AIR MEDIA



## Orchestral reviews

than majestic; and militancy accelerates as Fischer launches into the main movement at a startling crotchet=134. It's way beyond *Allegro ma non troppo*. But he keeps the pace and gears down smoothly for the second subject. Such distinctions are always so finely wrought that cumulative force isn't compromised.

Fischer looks deep into the music; his conducting empowers the musicians. The *Andante con moto* slow movement isn't quite *con moto*; but note how carefully the instrumental groups are balanced, notably at a magically soft moment before the recapitulation, when horns appear suspended over strings. Gravity of utterance rules, as it does in the *Scherzo*, too. Fischer doesn't let up in seriousness, subdued even in the long-arched melodies of the Trio. And the finale, an "example of grotesque power" (Tovey), finds him again in militant mood, building the movement to its fulfilment in a magnificently imposing coda. One critic thought this section expressed Schubert's terror of death. Jonathan Nott is less sanguine, more majestic in his view of the whole work. In both versions, the SACD sound reveals detail and refinements in expression. The fill-ups are fetching. **Nalen Anthoni**

### Weinberg

The Golden Key, Op 55 - Suite No 4.

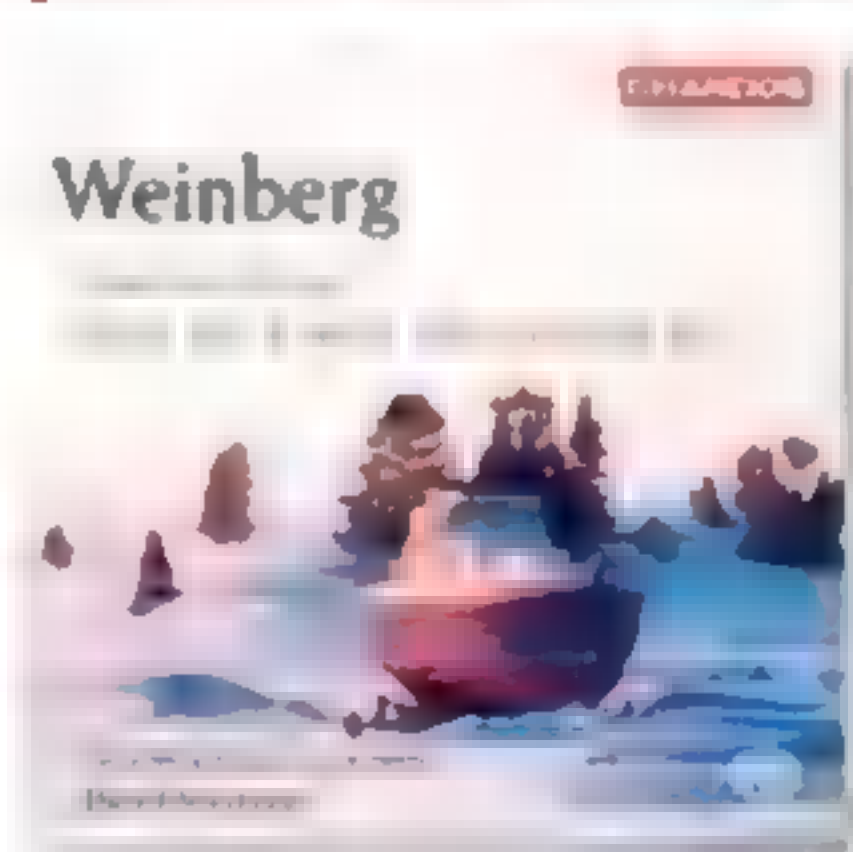
Symphony No 3, Op 45

Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra /

Thord Svedlund

Chandos © CHAN5089 (49' • DDD)

**Two nourishing finds, sympathetically performed and sumptuously recorded**



Chandos's on-going Weinberg survey continues with the Third Symphony that he wrote between March 1949 and June 1950 in the wake of the "anti-formalist"

purges instigated by Andrey Zhdanov. As David Fanning observes in his booklet-essay, Weinberg's incorporation of folk material into his symphony follows a doughty tradition in Russian/Soviet music "and its appearance in such works can by no means always be ascribed to external pressure". That said, the piece's aborted Moscow premiere almost certainly does reflect official disquiet (although the story runs that Weinberg discovered a number of errors during rehearsals and decided against the work going public). Ten years later, the composer substantially overhauled the symphony, which was first performed on March 23, 1960, in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory under the baton of Alexander Gauk.

There are four movements, the first of which uses a Belorussian folk song as a subsidiary idea (first heard on the cellos from 2'22"), its progress by turns serene and nervy, and

culminating in a coda of bleached remoteness. The ensuing scherzo (originally placed third) skips along delectably and again quotes a folk tune, this time from Poland (the mazurka-like idea from 1'36"); the cheeky pay-off will make you smile. In the slow movement, the initially subdued mood gradually gives way to something approaching anguish, before at last finding solace in a radiant C major. The energetic finale contains the most conspicuous echoes of Weinberg's friend and ally Shostakovich, and develops material from earlier in the work. Clean-cut, resourceful and by no means lacking in appealing thematic profile or communicative force, it's a symphony which certainly warrants investigation.

For a coupling we get the last of the four concert suites that Weinberg fashioned (in 1964) from his ballet *The Golden Key*. Based on a *Pinocchio*-inspired fairy-tale by Aleksey Tolstoy (1882-1945) and completed in 1955, this toothsome score had to wait until June 1962 for its premiere, during which time Weinberg subjected it to further revisions. There are seven numbers in all, the plums from which include the wistful "Elegy" (itself a reworking of a piece from the first volume of Weinberg's Children's Notebooks for piano, Op 16), charming "Dance of the Cat and the Fox" and engagingly pointed "The Lesson" (of which Prokofiev would have been proud).

These are beautifully prepared and thoroughly committed renderings under Thord Svedlund's clear-headed lead, realistically captured by the microphones within the Gothenburg orchestra's acoustically ideal home. Don't be deterred by the comparatively skimpy playing-time; the rewards here are considerable. **Andrew Achenbach**

### 'Poème'

Chausson Poème, Op 25 Respighi Poema

autunmale Suk Fantasy Vaughan Williams

The Lark Ascending

Julia Fischer *vn* Monte-Carlo Philharmonic

Orchestra / Yakov Kreizberg

Decca © 478 2684DH (70' • DDD)

### Dvořák - Suk

Dvořák Violin Concerto, Op 53. Romance for

Violin and Orchestra, Op 11 Suk Fantasy in

G minor for Violin and Orchestra, Op 24.

Fairy Tale, Op 16

Josef Suk *vn* Czech Philharmonic Orchestra /

Vaclav Neuman

Supraphon © SU 4047-2 (78' • AAD)

**Kreizberg's last Fischer partnership and archive Suk from his grandson**



The experience of listening to Julia Fischer's latest CD was tinged with sadness, cast as it was in the shadow of Yakov Kreizberg's recent death. Still,



thanks to the miracle of recording, the artistic potency of this symbiotic musical relationship transcends time...much as it will a hundred years hence

when none of us will be here. Fischer likens Respighi's *Poema autunmale* to film music, which is true enough (it's also true of much else that Respighi composed), and this warmly expressed performance focuses its combination of drive and reverie. Chausson's *Poème* thrives on the sort of fluent dialogue that Fischer and Kreizberg achieved as a matter of course and, although Fischer's playing is charged with emotion, she's placed in a sensible relation to the orchestra, balance-wise, which helps accentuate the subtlety and inward drama of Chausson's dialogic writing. As to *The Lark Ascending*, my own taste favours a performance where the soloist is a first among equals (Hugh Bean and Boult – EMI – have long provided my benchmark), and although Fischer's playing is often sublimely beautiful – the higher reaches of her tone, especially – I find her performance marginally, and only marginally, too "soloistic". But to call this performance anything less than sensitive would be unfair.

Suk's dashing, concerto-style Fantasy was recently recorded by Michael Ludwig with the Buffalo Philharmonic under JoAnn Falletta (Naxos). Fischer and Kreizberg are more comprehensively compelling – Kreizberg's witty handling of the variations section really made me smile – but I was happy to see that Supraphon have reissued Josef Suk's 1984 recording, originally coupled with his second (1978) version of Dvořák's Violin Concerto which, if anything, is even more gripping than his first, but that now includes, in addition to the Concerto, the lovely Dvořák Romance in F minor and the rapturously beautiful first movement of Suk's *Fairy Tale*, all featuring the Czech Philharmonic under the perceptive direction of Václav Neumann.

Summing up, in comparing the two versions of the Fantasy, I would say that Fischer's tonally alluring, full-blooded performance sits perfectly within the context of an imaginatively chosen programme, while the passionate projection and razor-like "edge" of Suk's playing bring out all the temperament and local colour that his grandfather (the composer Josef Suk) and great-grandfather (Dvořák) were famous for.

**Rob Cowan**

### 'English Spring'

Bax Spring Fire<sup>a</sup> Bridge Enter Spring

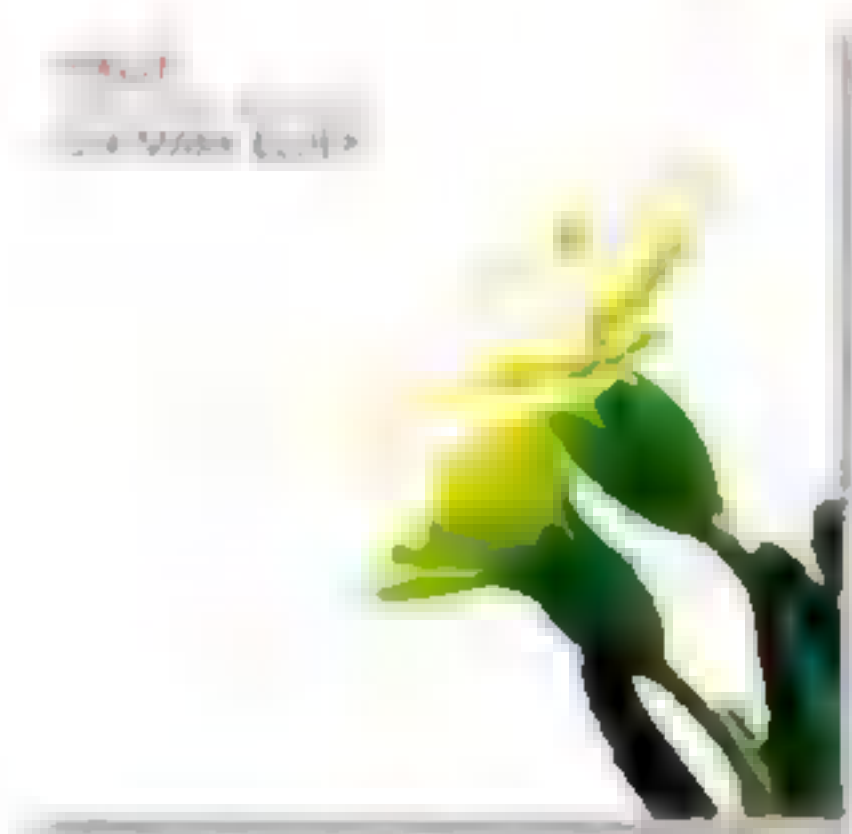
Delius Idylle de printemps<sup>b</sup>.

North Country Sketches – The March of Spring  
Hallé Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder





Hallé © CDHLL7528 (75' • DDD)

<sup>ab</sup>Recorded live at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester,<sup>a</sup>March 18, <sup>b</sup>October 14, 2010**Elder and the Hallé on peak form in a boldly imaginative programme**

The premiere of Bax's 1913 symphonic poem *Spring Fire* was to have taken place at the following year's Norwich Festival but the war intervened; a

projected 1916 performance under Beecham was also cancelled. Sadly, Bax never heard the piece and subsequently quarried material from it for other compositions. Inspired by the opening chorus from Swinburne's pagan poem "Atalanta in Calydon" and scored for a very large orchestra, *Spring Fire* serves up a feast for the ears and is positively teeming with seductive thematic invention, its penetrating harmonic scope and formal ambition prophetic of even greater achievements to come.

Mark Elder has long been a champion of this substantial score. I have an off-air recording of an invigorating performance he gave with the Chicago SO in May 2000 and this new version finds him on even more invincible form. His reading clocks in around three minutes longer than Handley's thrillingly combustible account (Chandos, 9/86<sup>R</sup>) but such is Elder's hypnotic control that one is held spellbound.

Delius's *Idylle de printemps* (1889) is, by comparison, small fry but exquisite all the same, much influenced by Grieg and quite beautifully served by these artists. It's followed by "The March of Spring" from *North Country Sketches*, which is surveyed with such pliancy, sensitivity to nuance and pantheistic wonder that one hopes Elder can in time be persuaded to give us a recording of this magical work in its entirety.

The disc ends on another high with Frank Bridge's exhilarating 1927 tone-poem *Enter Spring*, here given a performance of swaggering flair, fragrant atmosphere and bewitching refinement. Not only is Elder adept at teasing out the myriad details in Bridge's meticulous orchestral canvas, his bracingly cogent conception also manages to stress this music's more daringly progressive, "continental" features without stinting on its gorgeous local colour. My only tiny gripe surrounds the principal trumpet's top D seven bars before the end (20'08"), an octave higher than marked in the score and an emendation which sounds a touch flashy in the context of an otherwise scrupulously observant and tasteful display. No matter; Elder's remains a truly cherishable account of a great work to crown a collection that bids fair to be one of my records of the year.

Andrew Achenbach

www.gramophone.co.uk

**Poulenc**Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra<sup>a</sup>.Concert champêtre<sup>b</sup>. Suite française<sup>a</sup>Claire Chevallier *pf*<sup>b</sup>Kateřina Chroboková*hpd* Anima Eterna Brugge /Jos van Immerseel <sup>a</sup>*pf*

Zig-Zag Territoires © ZZT110403 (58' • DDD)



Something mildly fruity and soft-edged about the piano timbre in Jos van Immerseel's and Claire Chevallier's performance of

Poulenc's Two-Piano Concerto immediately tells you that they are not playing on modern Steinways. In fact they are using pre-First World War instruments by Erard, as they did on an earlier disc of two-piano music by Poulenc, Saint-Saëns, Manuel Infante and César Franck. Given that the concerto was written in 1932, the "period" flavour provided by pianos of 1896 and 1904 might be anachronistic but

van Immerseel's reasoning is that they are instruments "of the kind Poulenc will have seen in large numbers in Paris and which he may well have played". If we are accustomed these days to hearing Poulenc performed with more glint to the tone, the Erards' mellow French polish does add a warm halo of colour to the central *Larghetto*, and by no means dampens the *joie de vivre* of the finale. The orchestral playing is finely moulded to the pianos' spectrum of sonority so that, after the initial shock of hearing something out of the ordinary, the performance yields up much in finesse, fluency and fun.

There is a similar refinement to the orchestral mix in the "Suite française", Poulenc's re-imagining of music from the 16th century that here conveys all its piquancy of scoring and its blend of agility and elegance. In the *Concert champêtre* Kateřina Chroboková, playing a copy of a mid-18th-century French harpsichord, is deft and delicate in equal measure. **Geoffrey Norris**

**INTERVIEW****Jos van Immerseel**

Every instrument is a period instrument; we try to play ones which are as close as possible to a composer's co-ordinates. So for Poulenc we use instruments from French or Belgian factories or instruments of the French "type". The most interesting difference is in the flutes and bassoons. The bassoon, for example, is not a "faggot" as in Germany, but really another instrument - the French bassoon, a completely different type of instrument, as is the French saxophone. An instrument is only a tool, but it has an effect on articulation, on phrasing, on colours, on dynamic and so on. When you play

these instruments together for the first time you hear a completely different sound. Even without rehearsal it's utterly different. There is a fascination, perhaps a shock the first time, and that's good.

For me, Poulenc has an incredibly high level of orchestration, harmony and understanding of different styles. In terms of the perfect interpretation, well...if you play on the right historical instruments and you use the right texts and the right sources and you understand a little about the composer, then there is no real space for variations: it's either that, or it's not.

**Interview by Andrew Mellor**



# Chamber

A new Glass cycle • The Artemis Quartet's Beethoven finale • Music for Merce Cunningham

## Beethoven

String Trios – Op 3; Op 9 No 1; Op 9 No 3

Leonid Kogan *vn* Rudolf Barshai *va*

Mstislav Rostropovich *vc*

Supraphon Archiv mono (M) ② SU4052-2 (83' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Rudolfinum, Prague, June 2, 1960

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Leopold Trio (1/99<sup>8</sup>) (HYPE) CDD22069

Op 9 – selected comparison:

Kagan, Bashmet, Gutman (LIVE) LCL141

### Three great Soviet musicians at the 1960 Prague Spring Festival



Here is the latest instalment of Supraphon's issue of classic concerts given in Prague in the 1950s and '60s. This one dates from June 2, 1960, at the

Prague Spring International Music Festival. And what a line-up: three supreme Soviet artists, for whom Czechoslovakia represented a taste of freedom while the West remained out of bounds. And there's freedom aplenty in these vigorous, highly charged performances: just sample the concluding *Presto* of Op 9 No 1 or the opening movement of the E flat major Trio, Op 3. These are strong-jawed readings with a great sense of purpose and, even when some of the details are a bit shaky (and tuning and ensemble less than pristine), they are never less than compelling.

In the opening movement of the C minor Trio, Op 9 No 3, the players dig into the cragginess of Beethoven's writing. Yes, the Leopold Trio offer a cleaner, more refined approach that's easier to live with, but this gets to the heart of the matter. Another asset to this set is the violinist himself, Leonid Kogan, whose tone is searing in its intensity.

What is less easy to live with is the rubato, particularly in the slower movements (the *Adagio* of Op 9 No 1 being a case in point). Here, the Leopold Trio are all the more effective for letting the music speak for itself. However, if it's Russian temperament that you want, it's worth seeking out the readings from Oleg Kagan, Yuri Bashmet and Natalia Gutman on Live Classics, over-reverberant acoustic notwithstanding. But this new release captures a compelling moment in history: it must have been some evening!

Harriet Smith



## Beethoven

String Quartets – No 3, Op 18 No 3;

No 5, Op 18 No 5; No 16, Op 135

Artemis Quartet (Natalia Prischepenko, Gregor

Sigl *vns* Friedemann Weigle *va* Eckart Runge *vc*)

Virgin (E) 070834-2 (78' • DDD)

### The Artemis complete their Beethoven survey with early and late quartets



Promise blossoms.

The Artemis Quartet's previous recording (of Op 18 No 1 and Op 127 – 12/10) was, despite a couple of reservations, an example of resolute integrity. Probity is repeated here, starting with Op 18 No 5, which opens the programme; and Basil Lam's description of the first movement *Allegro* as "amiable" and of "cheerful, unaggressive energy" finds no sympathy with these musicians. Their combination of rhythmic control and dynamic accent shapes a line where tensions, relaxations, changes of pace and mood produce a dramatic force that is far from amiable or cheerful. Early Beethoven it may be but the music contains many a hint of future developments; and they are not lost on the Artemis, either here or in Op 18 No 3. The slow movement of this work, *Andante con moto*, feels like a first step that 25 years later reached the Cavatina of Op 130 and then the meditative counterpart of Op 135.

*Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo* is Beethoven's direction for what in one of his sketches he also subtitled "Sweet song of rest or peace". The Artemis don't quite achieve "sublime paralysis" (Robert Simpson) but they compensate with an example of consistently superb ensemble, grounded by a strong cello line and refined by an internal balance where every voice tells. And if they miss some of the humour that others see in the first and last movements, they don't at any stage slight the stature of the music. You are always made aware of greatness.

Nalen Anthoni

## Beethoven

Complete Works for Cello and Piano

David Geringas *vc* Ian Fountain *pf*

Hänssler Classic (E) ③ CD93 272 (3h 17' • DDD)

Cpte Wks – selected comparison:

Perényi, Schiff (12/04) (ECM) 472 401-2

Sonatas – selected comparison:

Fournier, Schnabel (ARCH) ARPCD0133

### Enriching performances of Beethoven's complete music for piano and cello



Historic indeed: the Op 5 pair (1796) appear to be the first cello sonatas with a written-out piano part. But Beethoven limited himself to two

movements, preceding each first movement with a slow introduction, that of the G minor Sonata virtually a slow movement in itself titled *Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo*.

Artur Schnabel is impressively serious here; András Schiff is conscious of an element of free-form in the music. Ian Fountain, hewing close to the marking, is both sustained and expressive, offering fantasy tied to profundity. A pianist of finely tuned artistic sensibilities, he leans into notes and plays into textures, his tonal palette encompassing a stark accent as easily as it does a graduated lyrical line. David Geringas is a master of line too, protean in his command of subtleties and nuances of expression. Both are superlative artists and in just accord, their interpretations wholly thought through and wholly communicated.

Turn to the best known work, Op 69. You'll notice that Geringas phrases the first theme of the opening movement a little differently than expected – an example to show that all the performances are played from texts recently researched and edited by these musicians. You'll also notice that Beethoven's contrasts through modulations here are unmistakably delineated. It's a pointer to how Fountain and Geringas heighten changes in character; and changes in tone quality too, as in the *Andante* introduction to Op 102 No 1, where Geringas adjusts his timbre to meet the requirement for a soft, tender, sweetly singing style.

These works are for piano and cello. The recorded balance reflects the priority and recorded sound, despite small changes in level here and there, doesn't stand in the way of the concentrated listening that Fountain and Geringas induce in the listener. Consider for example the empyrean slow movement of the last sonata, marked *Adagio con molto sentimento d'affetto*. It's in two keys, and these musicians turn the chorale-like D minor first section into music of prayerful beauty. They'll drag





you into its ambience, as they will into the ambience of the whole programme. Succumb, and be enriched. **Nalen Anthoni**

## Beethoven • Furtwängler

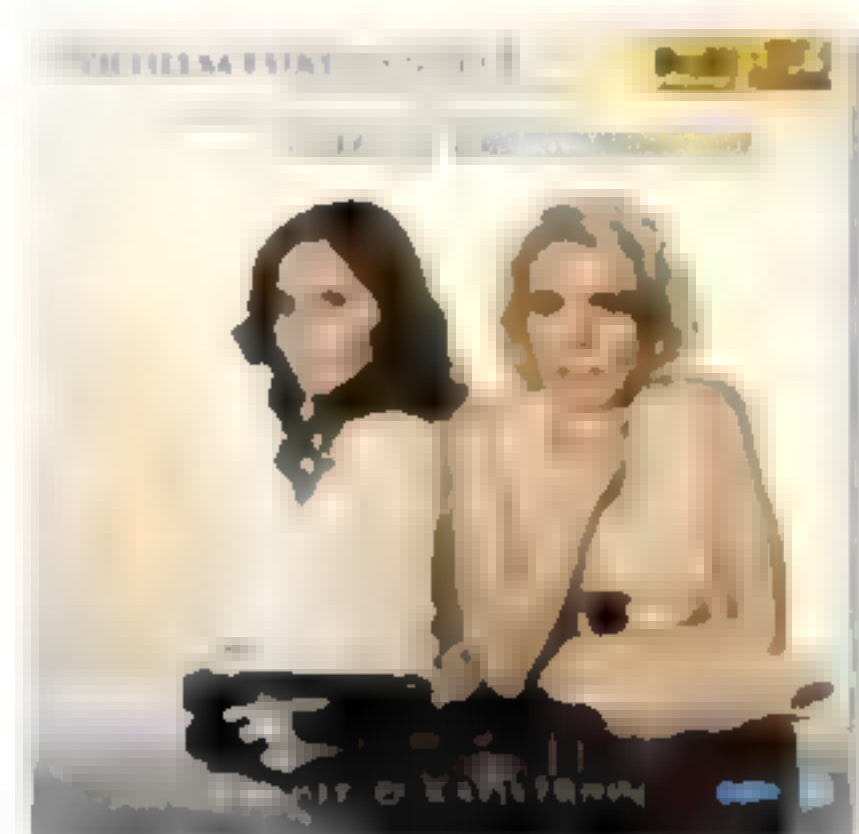
**Beethoven** Violin Sonata No 8, Op 30 No 3

**Furtwängler** Violin Sonata No 2

**Sophie Moser** *vn* **Katja Huhn** *pf*

Profil © PH11023 (60' • DDD)

**Brahms is brought to mind in the music of a composer-conductor**



Not a few major conductors wanted also to be remembered as composers and Furtwängler was certainly well equipped musically to fulfil both roles. He studied privately as a youth under both Rheinberger and Max von Schillings, and wrote his first symphony at the age of 17. Two other symphonies followed in 1944 and 1953, matching Bruckner in their expansive ambition but perhaps not their communicative success.

His Second Violin Sonata (1938-39) owes more to Brahms. It reveals a distinct lyrical flair, especially in the touching central *Andante cantabile*. This is quite memorable and might be successful as a basis for film music, as it is beautifully played by Sophie Moser. The snag is that, although it opens in muted fashion, the climaxes of the powerful extended first movement (16'30") are inclined to be bombastic, not helped here by the piano, where both the playing (of Katja Huhn) and also the balance tend to dwarf and even all but drown the violin at times. The *Presto* finale presses forward with great gusto and moments of lyrical passion but, again, the piano is too dominant, even though the vigorous commitment of both performers is compulsive.

The duo are even more at home in Beethoven's G major Sonata, and here the balance is as excellent as the performance. The vigour of the bold, good-humoured first movement is admirably shared, the engaging second movement is played with affectionate grace (*molto moderato e grazioso*) and the finale is splendidly spirited. Most enjoyable.

**Ivan March**

## Berg • Schoenberg • Webern

**Berg** Lyric Suite<sup>a</sup> **Schoenberg** String Quartet No 2, Op 10<sup>b</sup> **Webern** Six Bagatelles, Op 9.

Langsam, 'Schmerz immer, Blick nach oben'<sup>a</sup>

<sup>b</sup>**Sandrine Piau** *sop* <sup>a</sup>**Marie-Nicole Lemieux** *contr*

**Quatuor Diotima** (Yun-Peng Zhao, Naaman Sluchin *vns* Franck Chevalier *va* Pierre Morlet *vc*)

Naïve © V5240 (64' • DDD)

**Immediacy and conviction in small scores from the Second Viennese School**



It has long been known that the *Largo desolato* finale of Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite* involved a setting of Baudelaire's "De profundis" (translated into German)

whose text Berg suppressed, together with the work's other coded associations with himself and his lover Hanna Fuchs-Robettin.

If you believe the whole point of the Suite to be that it masks its own true significance, using overt connections with dedicatee Alexander von Zemlinsky and his *Lyric Symphony* (briefly quoted in the fourth movement) as a smokescreen, then you won't approve of this recording, which offers only the vocal version – found in a score marked up by Berg but never published – and does not include the purely instrumental text as an alternative. I certainly wouldn't argue for the vocal version as a permanent replacement for that instrumental text: if Berg had intended a performable vocal setting he would surely not have had the vocal line doubled throughout by one or other of the instruments. But in a performance of the whole work as richly characterised and technically assured as this one by the Quatuor Diotima, I'm happy to make an exception.

The quartets by Webern and Schoenberg are done with equal flair, and in Schoenberg's Second there's a rare opportunity to hear the peerless Sandrine Piau in post-Wagnerian vein, projecting the Kundry-like agonies and ecstasies of the work's last two movements with formidable conviction. The closely focused quality of the recorded sound seems right for the claustrophobic atmosphere that links all three compositions and helps to ensure that this supremely dramatic music – even in the case of Webern's tiny, barely audible Bagatelles – comes to life with startling immediacy. **Arnold Whittall**

## Borodin • Rachmaninov Shostakovich

**Borodin** Cello Sonata **Rachmaninov** Cello

Sonata, Op 19. Vocalise, Op 34 No 14

**Shostakovich** Cello Sonata, Op 40

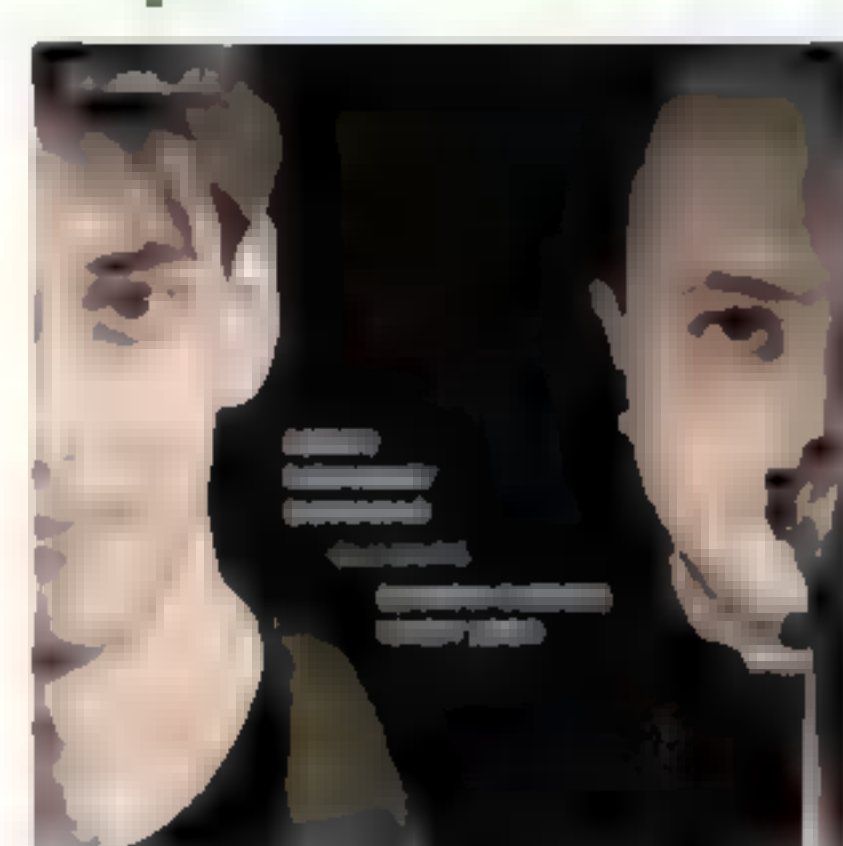
**Alexander Chaushian** *vc* **Yevgeny Sudbin** *pf*

BIS © BIS-SACD1858 (82' • DDD/DSD)

*Rachmaninov* – selected comparison:

*Mørk, Thibaudet* (11/96) (VIRG) 545119-2

**Three sonatas and the popular Vocalise in performances it would be hard to fault**



Who is going to turn up their noses at 82 and a half minutes of Russian cello-and-piano classics, delivered with complete technical aplomb and sureness of idiomatic touch by one of the finest partnerships around? Not me. Chaushian and Sudbin show that it is actually possible to deliver

Rachmaninov's Sonata full-throatedly without making it sound like a piano concerto with cello accompaniment. And they demonstrate equally that Shostakovich's Sonata does not need hysterical exaggeration of its subtexts in order to be richly communicative.

That brace of sonatas alone would have made for a worthwhile disc. Borodin's B minor Sonata, a fragmentary early-ish work completed by Mikhail Goldstein, admittedly promises rather more than it delivers, and, not knowing the manuscript, I have no idea which hand is responsible for the bits of the Second Symphony and allusions to other composers dotted throughout the somewhat chaotic structure – Goldstein was, after all, a notorious spoofer. There have been other recordings of this curiosity but, if you fancy having it in your library, you would be lucky to find it played half as well as it is here.

In the Rachmaninov I hear still more range of colour and attack – and in general a more rapturous responsiveness – from Mørk and Thibaudet, and for the Shostakovich I would certainly want to turn from time to time to larger-than-life personalities such as Rostropovich and the composer (whose 1957 recording comes and goes on various labels but is rarely long absent from the catalogue). Chaushian is also non-indulgent to a fault in the famous *Vocalise*. But for reference versions of this repertoire, distinguished by impeccable taste and top-notch sound, I would be greatly reassured to have this new disc on my shelves, too. **David Fanning**

## Brahms

Piano Quintet, Op 34<sup>a</sup>. Zwei Lieder, Op 91<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup>**Andrea Hill** *mez* **Jean-Frédéric Neuburger** *pf*

<sup>a</sup>**Quatuor Modigliani** (Philippe Bernhard, Loïc Rio *vns* <sup>b</sup>Laurent Marfaing *va* François Kieffer *vc*)

Mirare © MIR130 (53' • DDD)

*Pf Qnt* – selected comparisons:

*Serkin, Budapest Qt* (5/65<sup>R</sup>) (SONY) 82876 78748-2

*Pollini, Quartetto Italiano* (6/87<sup>R</sup>) (DG) 474 8392GOR

*Curzon, Amadeus Qt* (1/99) (BBCL) BBCL4009-2

*Fleisher, Emerson Qt* (9/07) (DG) 477 64582GH

*Hough, Takács Qt* (1/08) (HYPE) CDA67551

**A passionate piano quintet that misses some of the finer points**



Jean-Frédéric Neuburger and the Quatuor Modigliani address Brahms's noble and finely wrought Piano Quintet – an early masterpiece from the

composer's *Sturm und Drang* period comparable in reach and stature to the First Piano Concerto – with all the passion it deserves. I have no problem with the players' impassioned breaths or with a recording that marries immediacy and clarity to good effect.

Alas, with expectation set so high, disappointment brings with it double



## Chamber reviews

disappointment; nowhere greater than in the finale, where Brahms's strange, other-worldly introduction is so swiftly and uncaringly dispatched and where the movement's principal subject – gracious, classical, almost Haydnesque in feel – emerges with so little character and point. Even in the *Scherzo*, where the testosterone count is high and where you might expect these players to excel, there is some ugly detail and a pulse that is not entirely stable.

The best of the old-school quartets understood how to give point to Brahms's stormy moods by the careful realisation of the craft that gives them their shape and, by devolution, their emotional validity. As to the pianists heading my selected comparisons – Curzon, Fleisher, Pollini, Serkin – they are all notable Brahmsians in their own right. (Richter, too, if you can still find that wonderful old recording issued by Melodyia of the Quintet he made with the Borodin Quartet.)

The two songs for mezzo-soprano, viola and piano make an agreeable coupling but here again one misses a dimension of musical imagination in the way phrases are shaped and words are pointed and coloured.

Richard Osborne

## Dvořák • Suk

**Dvořák** Capriccio: Rondo di concert, Op 24 & 27 B81. Violin Sonata, Op 57 B106. Violin Sonatina, Op 100 B183 **Suk** Ballade, Op 3 No 1. Four Pieces, Op 17

**Antje Weithaas** *vn* **Silke Avenhaus** *pf*  
Avi-Music © AVI8553201 (78' • DDD)

*Dvořák Sonata, Sonatina – selected comparison:*

*Liebeck, Apekisheva (11/09) (SONY) 88697 49963-2*

**A distinguished duo recital of the familiar and the less well known**



Antje Weithaas and Silke Avenhaus make a real duo partnership. It's obvious they've worked in a detailed way at these performances but it's their awareness and responsiveness that's most striking.

The Dvořák Capriccio is a rarity but not, I think, a particularly valuable one; its main theme is unremarkable and over-used, though Weithaas and Avenhaus make the most of its occasional moments of real beauty. The other less-familiar piece, the Suk Ballade (extraordinarily mature music for a teenage student), is more fertile ground for the duo; they revel in its expressive harmonies and in the imaginative way the two instruments are combined. The first of Suk's Four Pieces is taken quite slowly, very different from the famous 1946 recording by Ginette and Jean Neveu (now on Dutton); it makes the unusual chord progressions seem wonderfully sinister.

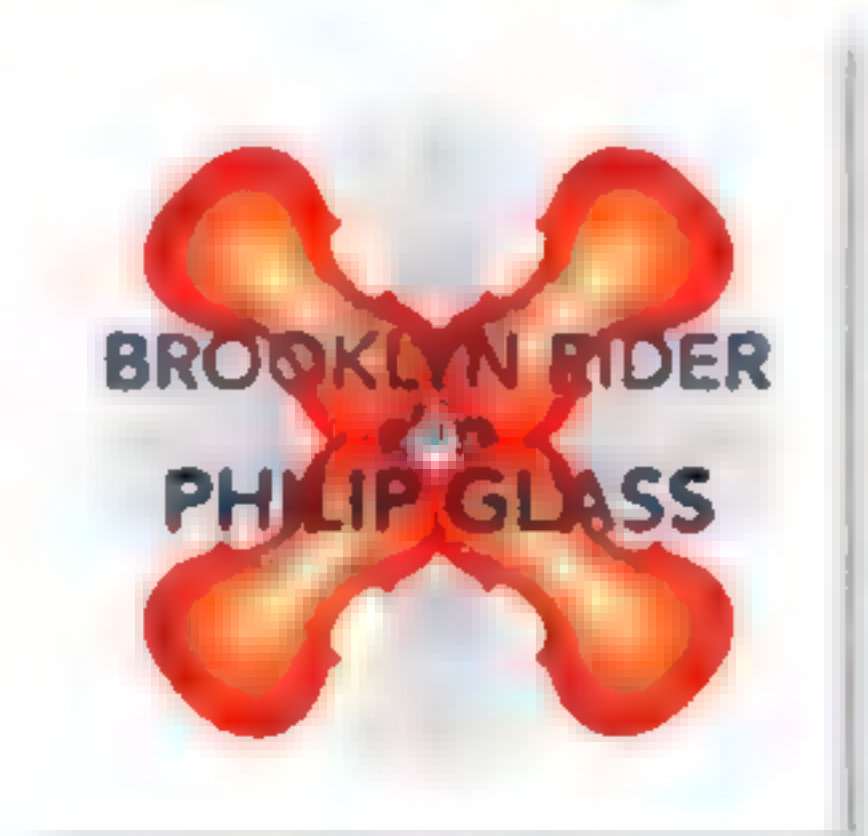
*Un poco triste* does appear rather too slow but the two faster pieces are splendidly alert and sharply characterised.

Compared to the spirited, outgoing 2006 recordings of the Dvořák Sonata and Sonatina from Jack Liebeck and Katya Apekisheva, Weithaas and Avenhaus seem more precise and controlled, a perfectly focused photograph as against a bold painting with broad brushstrokes. Generally, I find I prefer this new version, decisively so in the Sonata's middle movement, where the gentle rocking motion is captured perfectly, and in the Sonatina. Here, I especially enjoyed the stylish delivery of the finale's pre-ragtime syncopations and the finely managed transitions between the different episodes in the *Larghetto*. It's a truly distinguished recital – thoroughly recommended. **Duncan Druce**

## Glass

Complete String Quartets. Suite from 'Bent'  
**Brooklyn Rider** (Johnny Gandelsman, Colin Jacobsen *vns* Nicholas Cords *va* Eric Jacobsen *vc*)  
Orange Mountain Music © ② 0074 (110' • DDD)

**New York recordings of Glass's complete output for string quartet**



I've said it once and I'll say it again. I've said it once and I'll say it again. I've said it once and I'll say it; again I say Philip Glass's String Quartet No 1 is a great piece.

Some might consider that a backhanded compliment, one that's not worth repeating, given that his First Quartet dates from 1966, shortly after the composer completed his studies with Nadia Boulanger, and is only tangentially connected to his mature canon. But I mean it sincerely. By 1966 even Morton Feldman hadn't quite worked out that seemingly insignificant, low-key melodic modules, when customised and transformed, could build into overarching statements. Feldman would ultimately work this conceptual disjoint between material and form – or scale, he called it – into a grander and aesthetically more far-reaching art than Glass's; but Glass's structural mastery, the sort of blue-sky stuff that would serve him well subsequently in *Music for Twelve Musicians*, is already operational as tart, fidgety dissonances hop in and around lopsided structural grooves.

With cycles by the Kronos Quartet (Nonesuch), Smith Quartet (Signum, 6/08) and Carducci Quartet (Naxos, 9/10) already in the can, Brooklyn Rider offer the world premiere recording of a suite from Glass's music for Sean Mathias's film *Bent*, but that's not necessarily a recommendation because it sounds like everything else he's written over the past 30 years. The Smiths stress the First Quartet's modernist core; Brooklyn Rider

blend Glass's sonorities more amenably. The choice is yours.

Stylistically, the later quartets are reassuringly/depressingly familiar. String Quartet No 3 was also cobbled together from film music and is painfully thin; No 5 is just thin anyway. String Quartet No 4 is blessed with some chancy polytonal ideas, which highlights how manufactured the other music feels. But these performances have been meticulously prepared, as you'd expect from the recording division of Glass's own publishing company.

Philip Clark

## Tchaikovsky • Kissine

**Kissine** Zerkalo (The Mirror)

**Tchaikovsky** Piano Trio, Op 50

**Gidon Kremer** *vn* **Giedre Dirvanauskaite** *vc*

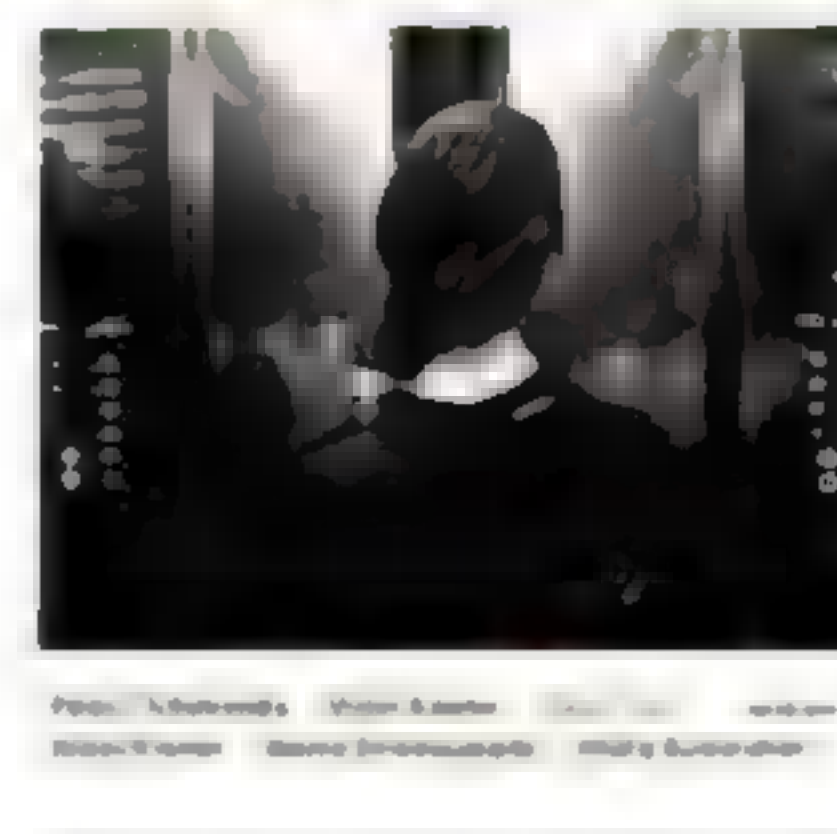
**Khatia Buniatishvili** *pf*

ECM New Series © 476 4171 (71' • DDD)

*Tchaikovsky – selected comparison:*

*Kremer, Maisky, Argerich (10/99) (DG) 459 326-2GH*

**Kremer returns to Tchaikovsky's Trio but with less compelling results**



Gidon Kremer has recorded the Tchaikovsky Trio before – a patched live affair with Argerich and Maisky, where he had to submit to the wildness

and whimsy of his pianist, and the upshot was a tremendous, if to some tastes excessively frantic, intensity.

This new version is very different. Working with less starry, though clearly highly accomplished partners, Kremer is now much more in charge. But the emotional temperature is lower and the overall effect far less compelling. Perhaps fearful of overstatement, the pianist actually defers rather too much to her partners, and her solos are pale in tone and over-nuanced rhythmically. As a result the structural flow is repeatedly and seriously undermined, and Tchaikovsky's grand-scale design emerges as a series of more or less mannered salon-like episodes (some of them, such as the fast-forward account of the music-box variation in the second movement, hard to defend).

One hearing is also more than enough, I feel, for Victor Kissine's recent *Zerkalo* (The Mirror), whose belated blend of Schnittke and George Crumb spreads its substance thinly over 20 minutes. Recording quality that bathes the stage in reverberation only makes matters worse.

David Fanning

## Rameau

Pièces de clavecin en concerts (1741)

**Aapo Häkkinen** *hpd* **Petri Tapio Mattson** *vn*

**Mikko Perkola** *va da gamba*

Alba © ABCD318 (68' • DDD)



## Selected comparisons:

Rousset, Terakado, Uemura (4/93<sup>R</sup>) (HARM) HMA195 1418

Pinnock, Podger, Manson (3/03) (CHNN) CCSSA19002

B Kuijken, S Kuijken (ACCE) ACC10093

**Rameau lays down challenges musical and logistical, with most met rather well**

The first challenge with Rameau's *Pièces de clavecins en concert* is to decide exactly what they are. Genuine chamber works or character pieces for harpsichord that have

been nicely accessorised with accompanying lines? Then there's the question of which instruments to use. Rameau left multiple possibilities: flute or violin on the upper line, and second violin or viola da gamba on the lower one. The composer also gave permission for the suites to be played as harpsichord solos, though many of the movements would fall flat without the instrumental additions.

The three Finnish players on this distinguished release put the harpsichord resolutely at the centre of the sonic balance. Aapo Häkkinen's playing, razor-sharp and rhythmically subtle, is worth the spotlight, but it means one hears a considerably less forward sound from his two interlocutors, especially when compared with the more robust chamber sonorities of Pinnock, Podger and Manson – or Rousset, Terakado and Uemura on what is probably the finest recent recording. Mikko Perkola's gamba is particularly retiring on this recording and there are times when one wishes for a more growly, rattling bass support.

But the trio meet the fundamental requirement: each character sketch in these three-movement works is precise and perfectly limned, with simplicity the general rule. Where Pinnock, for example, opts for the buff stop in the *Quatrième concert*'s "L'Indiscrète", Häkkinen plays it straight, conjuring a glassy sheen in the rolling quintuplet figures that give the work its appealing instability. In "La Rameau", the mysteriously titled last movement of the set, they finesse a typically Rameau-ian challenge: music woven from figuration and enlivened by contrast, rather melodic profile.

Some advocates of Rameau may miss the flute or the mix of flute and violin on recordings such as the recent Barthold and Sigiswald Kuijken release. But if there's less timbral variety, there's no lack of colour and nuance when it comes to musical essentials: ornament, balance and canny choices of tempo. **Philip Kennicott**

**Schubert**

Piano Trios – No 1, D898; No 2, D929; in B flat, D28. Notturmo, D897

Vienna Schubert Trio (Boris Kuschner *vn* Martin Hornstein *vc* Claus-Christian Schuster *pf*)

Nimbus Alliance © ② NI6137 (108' • DDD)

D897, D898, D929 – selected comparison:

Schiff, Shiohara, Perényi (12/97<sup>R</sup>) (WARN) 2564 69967-5**A belated release for this worthwhile recording of Schubert's piano trios**

Why is a recording made in 1991, by a group that disbanded in 1993 after only eight years together, appearing so late? Whatever the

reason, there's cause for rejoicing today.

The Vienna Schubert Trio are masters of cohesion, phrase and dynamic, the members collectively skilled at dovetailing shared roles, while pianist Claus-Christian Schuster is equally comfortable leading discreetly from the background or assertively from the front. A prominent violin, however, skews the balance somewhat but the sound is acceptable. And the musicianship on offer offsets any technical defects.

Robert Schumann described the first movement of D898 as "a thing of grace, intimate and virginal". His words may be disputable yet there is a vein of lyricism running through it which these artists affectionately express through a rhythmic give and take, a kind of rubato within the framework of a regular pulse that also reveals many another emotions inherent in the music. A similar freedom of approach, but for a dissimilar result, prevails in the *Notturmo*, presumed to be the original slow movement of this Trio. Musicologist Alfred Einstein dismissed the piece as "a singularly empty *Adagio* with a few contrasts and modulations". The Vienna Schubert Trio beg to disagree, instead finding singularly large reserves of ardour implicit in the writing.

Many a reserve of ardour tumbles out in this interpretation of D929 too. Here Schumann hit nails on the head when he thought its opening *Allegro* "eloquent of extreme anger and passionate longing" and the *Andante con moto* slow movement "a sigh, rising to spiritual anguish". Schuster and his colleagues concur, seeing a work so far-flung in conception as requiring a response of matching stature. Schubert, perhaps feeling that he had gone too far in laying himself bare in the finale, removed its exposition repeat and cut 98 bars from the development section. Schiff & Co restore the original, as do Schuster & Co, and their graphic performance suggests Schubert did let himself go. Let's be glad the evidence wasn't destroyed.

Nalen Anthoni

**Smetana • Sibelius**

Sibelius String Quartet, 'Voces intimae', Op 56

Smetana String Quartets – No 1, 'From my Life'; No 2

Dante Quartet (Krysia Osostowicz, Giles Francis *vn*s Judith Busbridge *va* Bernard Gregor-Smith *vc*) Hyperion © CDA67845 (78' • DDD)

Smetana Qt No 1 – selected comparison:

Škampa Qt (1/08) (WIGM) WHLIVE0019

Smetana Qt No 2 – selected comparison:

Smetana Qt (BBCL) BBCL4137-2

**Three autobiographical quartets receive passionate readings**

Here is a coupling that works on several levels. Programmatically, Sibelius's "intimate voices" link up with the autobiographical driving force of both of

Smetana's quartets. Even more than with, say, Janáček's or Berg's quartets, of which the same might be said, that personal quality is bound up with physical affliction and with the frustration and protest this engendered. Go straight to the opening of Smetana's E minor (No 1) and you can even hear a remarkable affinity with the opening of Sibelius's Violin Concerto.

The Dante Quartet can scarcely be faulted in terms of passionate attack. Each performance is eloquent, intense and emotionally gripping, and not only at such painful high-points as the famous evocation of tinnitus in the finale of Smetana's *From my Life*. Passages such as the same quartet's *alla polka* and the corresponding movement in the D minor Quartet have an entirely appropriate earthiness and, overall, the urgency of all the fast movements is compelling.

In slower episodes a little more richness of tone would have been no bad thing, if only to set such passages in relief against the prevailing stoical moods. Even more impressive than the withdrawn quality the Dante Quartet find at key moments in *Voces intimae* would have been a stronger delineation of the sensuousness that Sibelius withdraws *from*. And while the third movement of Smetana No 2 is nothing if not *con fuoco*, I confess to feeling slightly bludgeoned by this stage. Partly responsible for that impression is a recording that's stronger on clarity than bloom, which in turn renders occasional patches of less than ideal intonation (such as the opening theme of Smetana No 1) harder to overlook. Though the same comment could be made of the sound picture on the recordings by the Škampa and Smetana Quartets, their tonal allure and focus is superior. **David Fanning**

**Telemann**

Sonata for Oboe and Bassoon, TWV41:g12.

Quartets – TWV43:D2; TWV42:F16;

TWV43:A2; TWV43:E1. Trio Sonatas –

TWV42: d4; TWV42:G13; TWV42: e9

Epoca Barocca

CPO © CPO777 441-2 (66' • DDD)



## Telemann

**Prowo** (attrib Telemann) Trio, TWV42:d10

**Telemann** Trio Sonatas – TWV42:e11;  
TWV42:g5; TWV42:F3; TWV42:h6.

Concertos – TWV43:G6; TWV43:a3

**Ensemble Meridiana** (Dominique Tinguely *rec/bn*  
Sarah Humphrys *ob* Sabine Stoffer *vn* Tore  
Eketorp *va da gamba* Christian Kjos *hpd*)

Linn ③ CKD368 (60' • DDD/DSD)

**Two different takes on Telemann's  
well-crafted chamber music**



Telemann's passion for chamber music, and his knowledge and command of contemporary styles and instrumental idioms, was exceptional.

And though his music never reaches the heights of that of his countrymen Bach or Handel, it is indisputably well crafted, versatile and appealing to players and listeners, as these

two new recordings highlight.

Epoca Barocca artfully juggle flutes, oboe, bassoons, cellos and continuo instruments in various combinations, producing a refreshing array of ensembles from duo sonatas to quartets. In the "Quadri" in D, F, A and E major, two flutes are paired first with two bassoons and then, in the third and fourth, with cellos; the second is taken by oboe, two bassoons and continuo. The oboe joins the flute and continuo in the trios and takes a solo turn in the G minor Sonata, accompanied by archlute and bassoon. These are stylish, beautifully paced performances.

Ensemble Meridiana's approach is more consciously virtuoso, less obviously French than Italianate. They also add a trio once thought to be Telemann's but now known to be by his contemporary, Pierre Prowo. Instead of flutes, they opt for recorder and violin, instead of two cellos, viol and bassoon.

In their hands both the G major and A minor Concertos sparkle. The violin carries the horn-call ritornello in the opening G major *Allegro*, allowing the recorder and oboe solo roles, while, in the *Grave* that follows, all three have solo turns; the continuo viol takes a bow in the finale. The A minor Concerto is characterised by rich ensemble textures, including as the second movement a garrulous fugue *a 4*. The trios offer further opportunities for individual instruments to shine. Prowo stands scrutiny well, the *allegros* Vivaldian, the *Presto* in the Polish folk style popular at the time. Ensemble Meridiana's tempi are generally quite quick but never driving, their slow movements invariably graceful.

Julie Anne Sadle



First fruit:  
Guadalupe del Moral

## Prize FRUITS

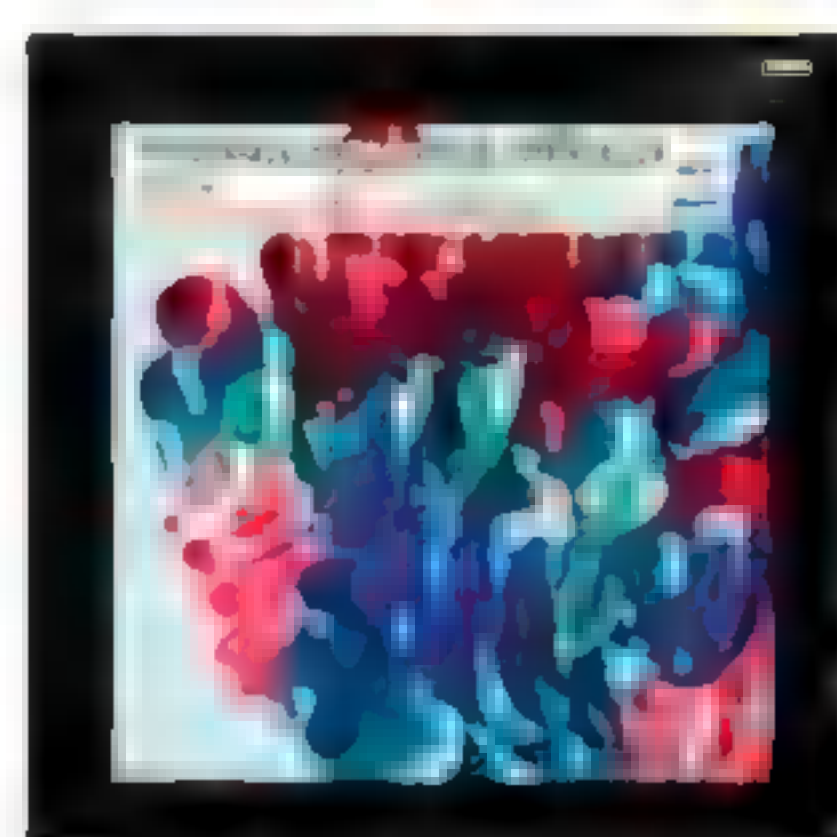
Ripe and succulent treats from Venice

### Legrenzi • Rosenmüller • Stradella

'Venezia'

**Legrenzi** Libro quarto di sonate – Sonata prima; Sonata terza *a 3*; Sonata terza *a 4*; Sonata sesta *a 4* **Rosenmüller** 12 Sonate – Sonata seconda; Sonata settima; Sonata nona; Sonata decima; Sonata undecima; Sonata duodecima **Stradella** Sinfonias – No 11; No 18; No 22

**Rare Fruits Council** (Guadalupe del Moral *vn* José Manuel Mavarró, Andoni Mercero *vn/va* Marco Ceccato *vc* Xavier Diaz *alte* Luca Guglielmi *hpd/org*) / **Manfredo Kraemer** *vn* Ambronay ③ AMY028 (82' • DDD)



The theme here is Venice, more precisely the city as a cultural entrepôt, where musicians and composers both native and foreign

lived, worked and exchanged ideas.

Legrenzi, born in nearby Bergamo, settled there in 1670 and, after a slow start, achieved professional distinction as chapelmaster at St Mark's Basilica. Stradella, who hailed from Tuscany, arrived in 1677, while Rosenmüller fled to Venice from Leipzig and stayed some 27 years. This ingeniously devised recording brings together works by these three very different composers from

dramatically contrasted cultural backgrounds and formations.

Unfamiliar though these pieces are, we are confronted here by persuasive accounts, some of quite breathtaking virtuosity. The forces required are constantly shifting, which makes for varied listening experiences of a selection that is certainly not uniform in quality but which none the less is constantly engaging. Manfredo Kraemer, whose brilliant technical and interpretational skills are familiar enough from the Rare Fruits Council's prize-winning discs, comes to the fore above all in Stradella's Sinfonia No 11, where the cascades of beautifully articulated figurations are sensitively supported by the other members of the group. Elsewhere the ensemble interplay is thoughtful and stylistically convincing, the overall sound focused and well blended – try Rosenmüller's *Sonata seconda* for a representative example. One idea of the disc is to propose that all three composers might have encountered each other in Venice. Although this seems highly unlikely, particularly in the case of Stradella, who only stayed in Venice for a few months before being hounded out of the city for having somewhat unwisely taken up with the mistress of one his patrons, in the end it is of little importance. **Iain Fenlon**



## ROUND-UP

# Music for Merce

Philip Clark explores the boxed-up musical legacy of a modern-dance giant

After nearly 60 years of persuading us that movement and music can coexist, or perhaps not, in a way that owes nothing to ballet, or to any other formal dance tradition, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company will be heading towards its final dance as this review is published. When Cunningham died in 2009 he left instructions that his Company should undertake a valedictory "Legacy Tour" before morphing into the Merce Cunningham Trust, to document and disseminate his choreography. Their farewell performance will be in New York on New Year's Eve 2011.

It would be a dirty journalistic trick if this next paragraph were to begin something like: "And it's a paradox that Merce Cunningham, who created dance pieces in the spirit of the chance procedures that his partner John Cage practised, left nothing to chance in life." Perhaps, if I'm honest, that's the sort of argument I was going to outline until I thought about things again. For a start, Cunningham's idea of chance was finely different from Cage's. Cage believed that chance procedures could liberate sound from compositional will and predilection, the inference being that composers have a tendency to squeeze the nutrient lifeblood out of sound by insisting on framing it "as music"; and the problem with "music", even good music like Beethoven's, is that sound becomes representational and is reduced to achieving goals self-defined by fallible egos when, Cage reckoned, we'd be better off zoning into sound as it already is.

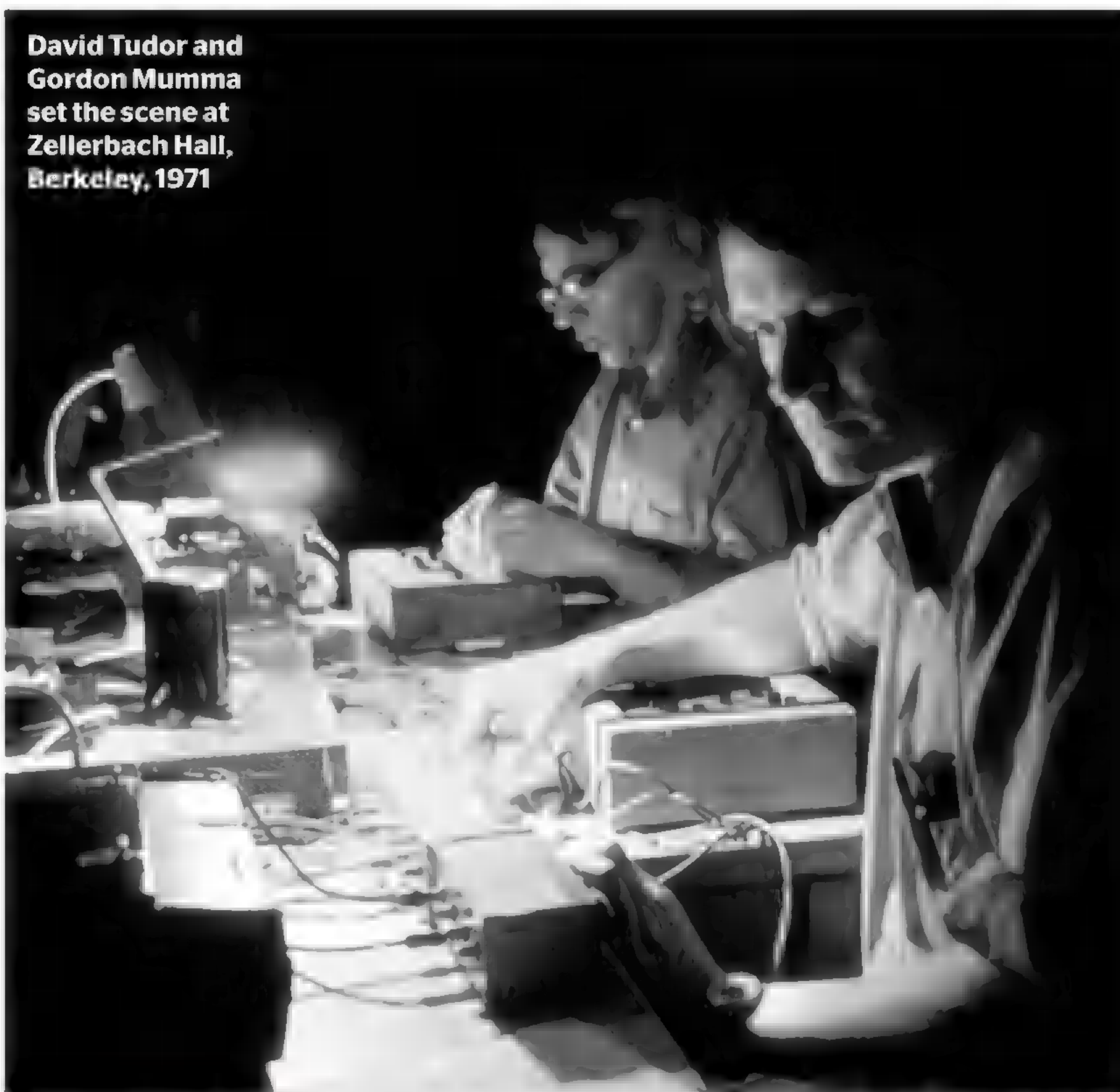
But, ironically enough for a dancer, Cunningham's feet were planted more firmly on the ground. The fact that, facing death, he instigated a master plan to secure his legacy is entirely consistent with my sense that he always choreographed with an eye to the future; he knew the worth of his contribution and wasn't about to leave anything about "brand Merce Cunningham".

to chance. Doing to dance grammar what Cage did to musical narrative would have involved hacking limbs from dancers in a Doctor Crippen-like attempt to reformat bodily harmony. Clearly there were limits, and his deployment of chance was more pragmatic, less confrontational than Cage's. Sugar-plum fairies and black and white swans were a profound irrelevance; Cunningham spoke instead about dance intersecting with real life. An anecdote recounted in the booklet to **Music for Merce**, this 10-CD retrospective anthology centred around the Merce Cunningham Dance Company's musical legacy, says it all. Remembering an occasion at Martha's Vineyard when he danced without music and was asked how that was possible, Cunningham recalls: "Then a gorgeous moth flew in and began moving in the most spectacular way around one light. And I just pointed."

Which rhymes precisely with Morton Feldman's fable about Stefan Wolpe, then his composition teacher, berating him for never "thinking of the man in the street". But then Feldman looks out of the window and - da-dah! - the first "man in the street" he sees happens to be Jackson Pollock. New York School associates excelled at illustrative parables and, who knows, perhaps one or two of these events might actually have happened.

Open the set's accompanying booklet and two action shots - one with Cunningham locked into the lotus position, the other with his leg hooked around a wooden chair as he glides forward - pirouette off the paper. Turn some more pages and highlighted quotes float idly mid-page: "A sound has no legs to stand on," Cage whimsically muses, while Cunningham explains: "We are involved in a process of work and activity, not in a series of finished objects." The New York School gang were usually good for quotes too, and the bulk of the

David Tudor and Gordon Mumma set the scene at Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley, 1971



music here is hooked around New York School concerns - there's loads of Cage and Christian Wolff, a piece each from Feldman and Earle Brown, and David Tudor is a catalytic force as pianist, composer and operator of live electronics. Fellow travellers include Pauline Oliveros, Gordon Mumma, David Behrman, Michael Pugliese, Jon Gibson and Takehisa Kosugi, the MCDC's current music director.

The first piece, Wolff's *For Magnetic Tape*, stirs up thoughts about that obvious elephant in the room - how can anyone possibly dance to this churning electronic fizzle and timbral hooting, questions that intensify as Tudor performs Wolff's

*For Piano I*, Bo Nilsson's *Quantitäten*, Earle Brown's *Indices* and Cage's *Music for Piano 1-20*, each piece flinging clusters and splintering note cells around the keyboard. If there might be an answer of sorts inside the curveballing impetus of Feldman's long-form, dreamy *Ixion* (performed on two pianos by Cage and Tudor), the flow is seamless, pulseless - there are no footholds for dance steps here - but then the vaporous electronica of Cage's *Variations I*, with its collaged chunks of classic jazz, blows those questions open again.

Moments when we hear the delicate thud of the dancers' feet imposing

an alternate temporal grid over the music are deeply fascinating. Cunningham wanted music and dance to share space and time but without dance moves necessarily being propped around the contours of music or compositional ambition needing to bow to the demands of choreography. Does all this music work without its visual component? Some pieces, Pauline Oliveros's *In memoriam* in particular, feel like there's a dimension missing; but Cage's *108/One* and the water-based *Inlets*, and Tudor's magnificent *Sextet for Seven*, dance through your imagination long after the curtain falls. ●

## Music for Merce

Music by **Maryanne Amacher, David Behrman, Earl Brown, John Cage, Stuart Dempster, Morton Feldman, Jon Gibson, Toshi Ichihyanagi, John King, Takehisa Kosugi, Annea Lockwood, Gordon Mumma, Bo Nilsson, Pauline Oliveros, Michael Pugliese, Yasunao Tone, David Tudor** and **Christian Wolff**  
New World © 10 80712-2



# Instrumental

Beethoven from Lewis and Fliter • Bach from Angelich • Chopin from Barenboim

## Albéniz . Granados Mompou

**Albéniz** Iberia Suite, Book 1 – Evocation; El puerto; Fête-Dieu a Seville **Granados** Goyescas – El amor y la muerte; El pelele **Mompou** Variations on a theme of Chopin (ed Salabert)

Sebastian Stanley *pf*

EMEC © E085 (61' • DDD)

Music full of poetry and pain that demands more heart than it gets



Sebastian Stanley is a young English pianist of Spanish origin who suitably entitles his programme *El amor y la muerte*, the fifth and greatest of

Granados's *Goyescas*. Suitably, because the agony and ecstasy at the heart of Catholic Spain permeates both the *Goyescas* and Albéniz's *Iberia*, twin peaks of the Spanish keyboard repertoire.

Both are ultra-demanding cycles enshrining deeply poetic hearts beneath a profusion of ornament. For Ernest Newman the *Goyescas* are “piano music of the purest kind” giving “the sense of passing the fingers through masses of richly coloured jewels”. For Messiaen, Albéniz was “parmi les étoiles” and *Iberia* received no less praise from Debussy. Certainly Stanley could hardly be more serious or committed to his complex and elusive challenge. But therein surely lies the rub. Much of the time I wished he could forget the microphone's intimidating scrutiny and aim for a greater freedom, élan and aplomb. Much of his playing is ponderous when it should take wing and achieve a higher degree of spontaneity and impetus. A certain heavy-handedness, too, makes Mompou's more limpid magic in his Variations (with their phantom memories of Chopin and, in Var 8, of Poulenc) outstay its welcome.

Stanley's Fazioli sounds close and opaque, yet even though there are superlative discs of these works – Alicia de Larrocha in both the *Goyescas* and *Iberia* (EMI 06/10) and Jonathan Plowright in the Mompou (Harmonia Mundi, 04/10) – this particular recital is a reminder of the incomparable richness of the finest Spanish piano music. **Bryce Morrison**

## JS Bach

Goldberg Variations, BWV988

Nicholas Angelich *pf*

Virgin © 070664-2 (80' • DDD)

Selected comparisons:

Gould (1/83<sup>R</sup>) (SONY) 88697 14853-2

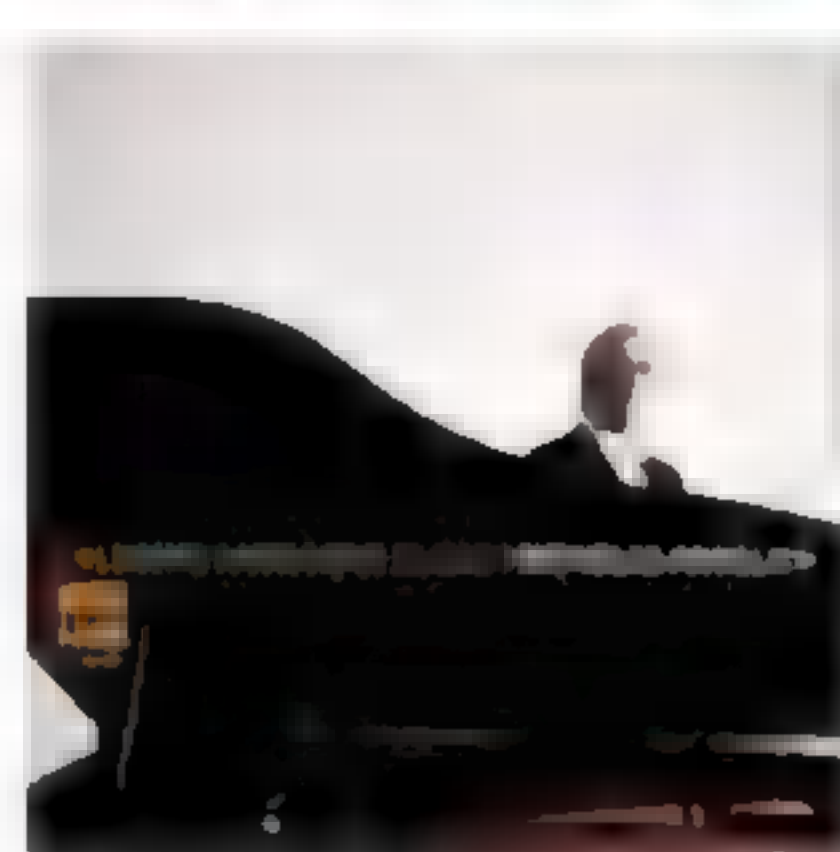
Tureck (1/99) (DG) 499 599-2GH2

Perahia (12/00) (SONY) SK89243

Bacchetti (4/08<sup>R</sup>) (DYNA) CDS659

Tal, Groethuysen (10/10) (SONY) 88697 52696-2

A distinguished set of Goldbergs – after a somewhat somnolent start



Johann Forkel, Bach's first biographer, tells us that the *Goldberg* Variations were written at the request of the keyboard prodigy

Johann Goldberg who needed pieces to entertain his insomniac employer Count Keyserlingk, the Russian ambassador to the Saxon court. The opening Aria would have surely sent the Count into the arms of Morpheus as played by Nicholas Angelich at a somnolent 5'20". Compare that with Glenn Gould's “autumnal” 1981 recording (3'05") and Murray Perahia, who takes 3'58" within an overall timing of 73'29" (Angelich occupies a single disc at 79'58").

That said, the Aria is Angelich's only serious misjudgement in this otherwise beautifully poised and cohesively structured account. In Var 7, for instance, played on many recordings like a siciliana, Angelich follows the *tempo di giga* marking found in the *Handexemplar* (Bach's copy found only in 1974); he offers a skittish Var 17 rather than the slow deliberation of Tureck, and an unindulgent view of the Var 25, the “black pearl” variation. The toccata movements, played with joyous abandon and an exemplary light touch, are a delight (try Var 14, “one of the giddiest bits of neo-Scarlatti-ism imaginable”, according to Gould).

This, in short, is a distinguished *Goldberg*, one to live with though not superior to Perahia's, the more emotionally engaging Andrea Bacchetti's, nor Tal and Groethuysen's two-piano version (arr Rheinberger and Reger) in which the final bar of the Quodlibet slips seamlessly back into the Aria *da capo* with a magical inevitability.

Jeremy Nicholas

## Beethoven

Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, Op 120

Paul Lewis *pf*

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2071 (52' • DDD)

Paul Lewis turns to the Diabellis – but the work seems curiously undersold



Behold Paul Lewis, a sensitive, cultured and relatively young pianist, determined to thoroughly plot out Beethoven's *Diabelli*

Variations with methodical, precise and well-modulated fingerwork. So why does he seem hesitant to go the next step and give in to the composer's wild mood-swings and emotional cumulation?

It's the details that betray Lewis's disengagement. He underplays the waltz theme's jabbing *sforzandos*, while Var 1's inconsistently observed rests flatten out the *Maestoso* march's gruff character. Also notice Lewis's sluggish, almost uniformly even and tensionless dispatch of Var 2's broken chords, in marked contrast to Stephen Kovacevich's quicker, infinitely more varied approach (Onyx, 1/09). Vars 11 and 12 similarly sound square and uneventful next to Brendel's enlivening inflections of phrase. True, one cannot quibble with Lewis's rhythmic poise in Var 5, Var 6's fiercely uniform trills and marked expressive contrasts, or the comic timing of Var 13's silences. But I wish he'd allowed just a little more breathing-room between unconnected variations, so that their individual characters can establish themselves.

Lewis's fast and glib traversal of Var 9 totally misses the meaning behind Beethoven's *pesante e risoluto* directive, not to mention the short-changed right-hand *szforzando* accents. Var 10's rapid chords are flawlessly tossed off, yet the *crescendos* lack real ferocity (here Lewis takes the chords on bar 56's last beat and bar 57's down-beat up an octave). Although Lewis projects volatile contrasts between Var 21's *Allegro con brio* and *Meno allegro*, he bridges them with unnecessary *ritards*. And while one can take accurate dictation from Lewis's scrupulously executed minor-key triumvirate (Vars 29, 30 and 31), don't expect the stinging accents, urgent slurs and heartfelt melodic trajectory



with which Arrau, Schnabel and Brendel grip your attention.

Perhaps the mellow resonance of Harmonia Mundi's engineering squashes Lewis's dynamic range down a few notches; but, then again, my favourite recent modern CD Diabellis (Benjamin Frith on ASV, the Stephen Kovacevich remake and Daniel Shapiro's powerful, gutsy version on Azica) are no sonic paradigms themselves. A gorgeously engineered late-1970s production preserved Charles Rosen's impeccable tempo relationships and flexible virtuosity in an unambiguously great interpretation that cries out for reissue. Still, there's no doubting Lewis's potential to give us a *Diabelli* Variations of equal stature but this release ultimately promises more than it delivers. **Jed Distler**

## Chopin

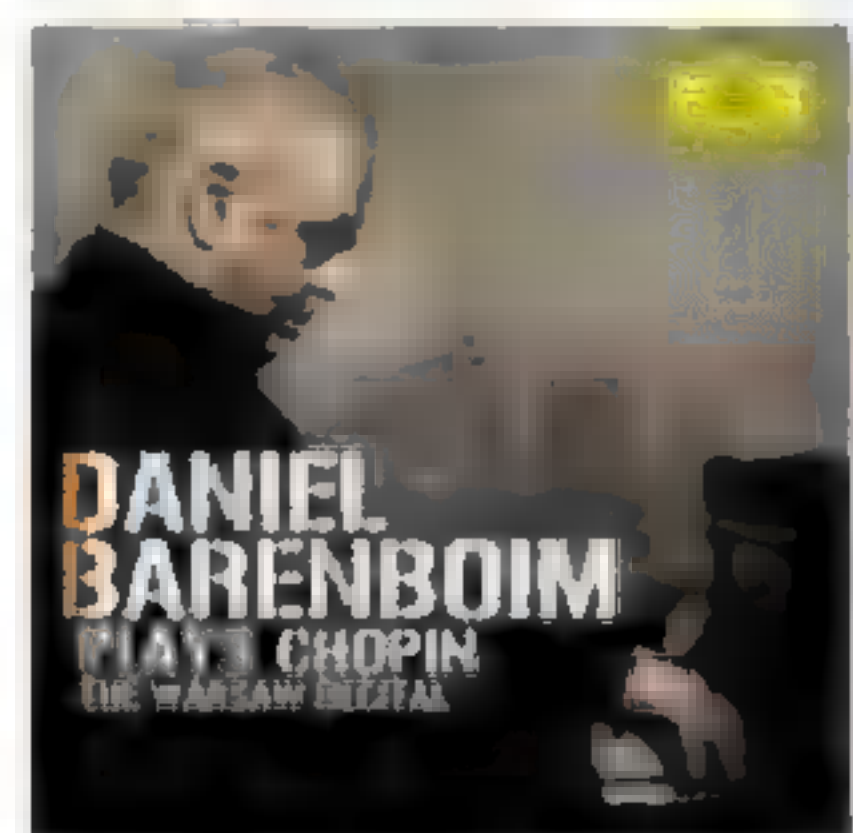
Barcarolle, Op 60. Berceuse, Op 57.  
Fantasia, Op 49. Nocturne, Op 27 No 2.  
Polonaise, Op 53. Piano Sonata No 2, Op 35.  
Waltzes – Op 34, Nos 2 & 3; Op 64 Nos 1 & 2

**Daniel Barenboim** *pf*

DG © 477 9519 (79' • DDD)

Recorded live at the National Philharmonic Concert Hall, Warsaw on February 28, 2010

**A colourful and profound capturing of Barenboim's depth and maturity**

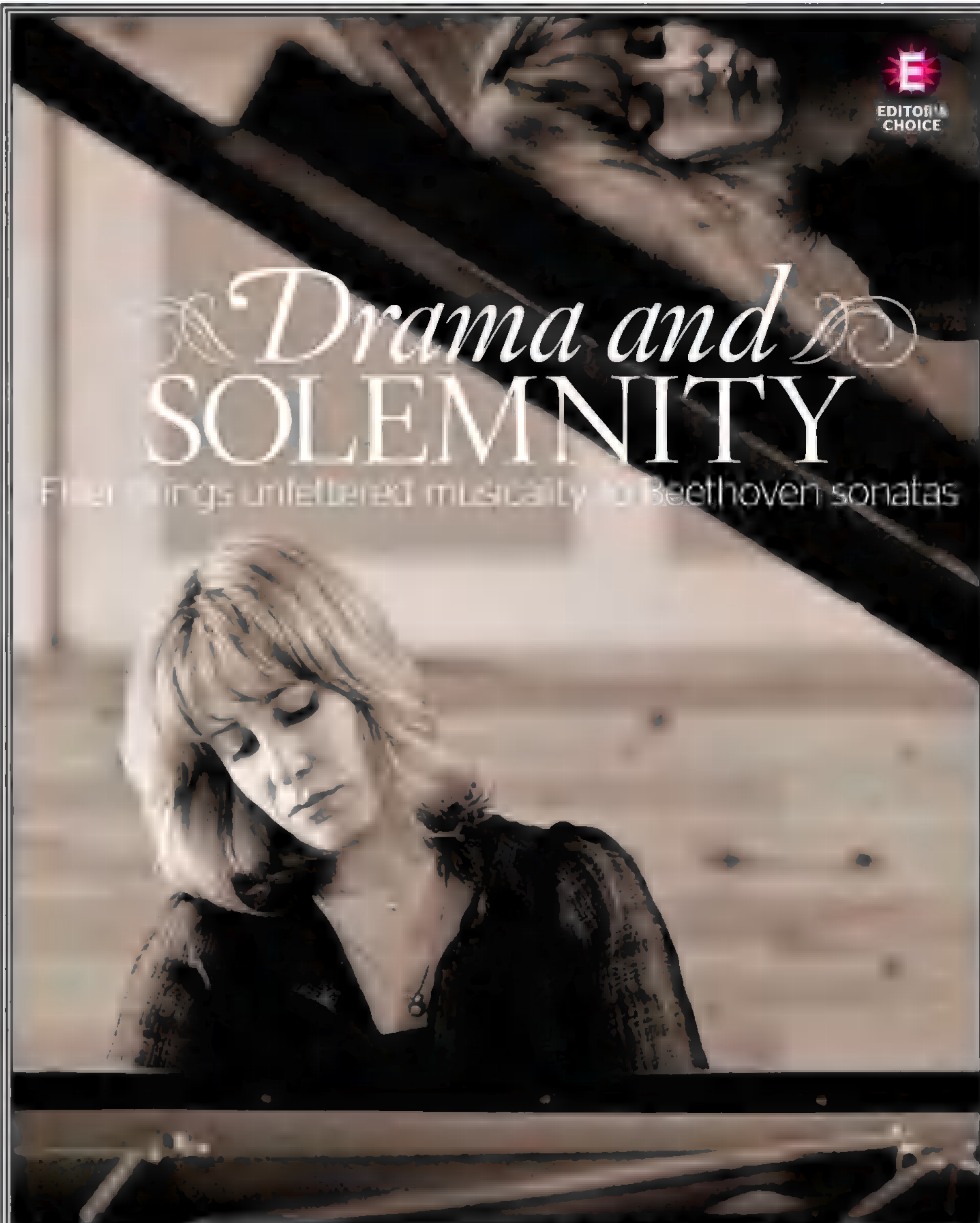


Few of Daniel Barenboim's infrequent past recorded encounters with Chopin hint at the depth, maturity, insight and tonal luster that distinguish this Warsaw

recital's finest moments. Those who know Barenboim's broad, epic and seriously cohesive EMI account of the F Minor Fantasia will discover new layers of intensity here in the pianist's minute rhythmic inflections of the opening march theme and purposeful *rubatos*.

The D flat Nocturne, too, emerges in a new three-dimensional light by way of Barenboim's textural layering of the right-hand melody against the rolling left-hand accompaniment. There's a far greater sense of continuity and linear sweep to the Chopin B flat minor Sonata's first two movements than in Barenboim's comparatively choppy, pounded-out EMI effort, and more mobility in the *Funeral March*, which benefits from a slightly faster yet still measured tempo. He shapes the *Presto* Finale quietly, deliberately and steadily, allowing the rise and fall of the phrases to speak with minimum accentuation.

The waltzes are pointed up with gorgeously varied articulations and well-contoured bass-lines that thankfully draw more attention to the composer than the pianist. Although Barenboim makes heavy weather of the A flat Polonaise's notorious central



**E**  
EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

## Beethoven

Piano Sonatas – No 8, 'Pathétique', Op 13;  
No 17, 'Tempest', Op 31 No 2;  
No 23, 'Appassionata', Op 57

**Ingrid Fliter** *pf*

EMI © 094573-2 (73' • DDD)



After her rapturously received Chopin recordings for EMI, Argentinian pianist Ingrid Fliter turns to Beethoven. And, in her grave, minor-key programme of three sonatas, she plays with an unfettered musical quality that takes you back to the great days of Solomon and Clara Haskil.

In the *Pathétique* Sonata she recreates Beethoven's "Romeo and Juliet" period – a burgeoning and romantic foretaste of so many great things to come – with the finest senses of both drama and solemnity. Her *Adagio cantabile* sings with an ease that truly soothes the savage beast and the

recitatives in the *Tempest* Sonata are as poised and mysterious as you could wish. Beethoven's suggestion that his listeners should read Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, a fable of rebirth and reconciliation, may remain an enigma, but it is surely Fliter's cardinal virtue that she gives you a renewed sense of wonder at the composer's pioneering strength and eloquence.

In the *Appassionata* Sonata Fliter is once more unswervingly serious, as true to the spirit as to the letter of the score. How difficult then to add that, as competition winner succeeds competition winner (usually to sink into oblivion after a few years – they are rarely the real McCoy) it is wonderful indeed to encounter a pianist of such exalted yet natural and unforced artistry.

EMI have recorded Fliter in demonstration sound at Pottton Hall. Rarely has this label been so lucky in its choice of pianists.

**Bryce Morrison**





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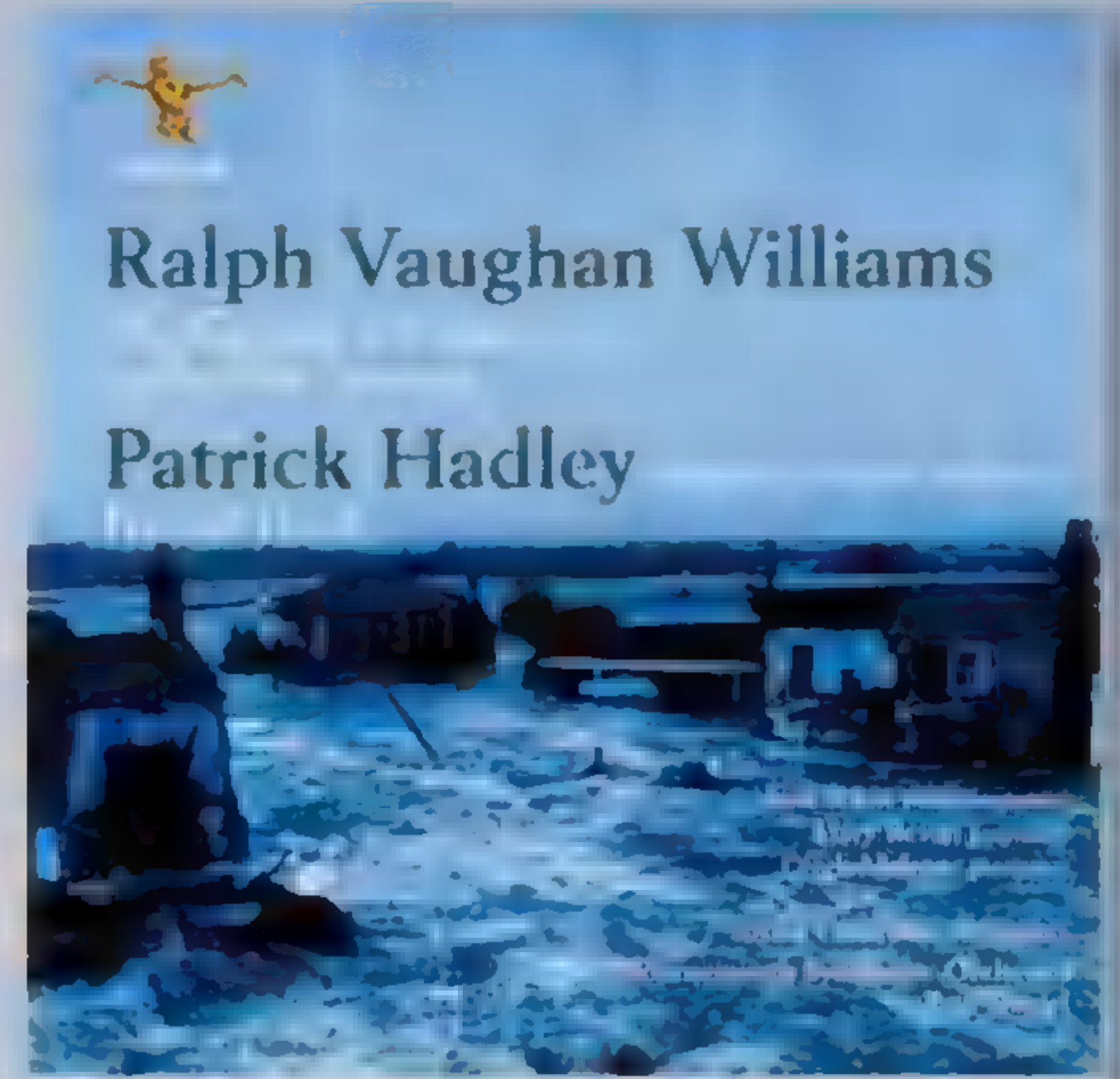
*The Garden of Proserpine*

## Patrick Hadley

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left-hand octaves and lacks the suppleness to project the outer sections' confident swagger as Rubinstein and Horowitz did in their respective primes, his *Barcarolle* ebbs and flows to more fluent effect than before, featuring patient unravelling of the sublime coda's densely populated inner voices.

The formerly sober and straightlaced *Berceuse* has also had a flexible and poetic makeover. Aside from distracting foot-stomping, the engineering's resonant ambience communicates a palpable sense of occasion and flatters Barenboim's huge, colourful sonority.

Jed Distler

## Chopin

24 Preludes, Op 28. Nocturnes – Op 9 Nos 1 & 2; No 20, Op *posth*. Waltzes – No 2, Op 34 No 1; No 3, Op 34 No 2; No 4, Op 33 No 3; No 19, Op *posth*

Jean-Yves Thibaudet *pf*

Dal Segno (M) DSPRCD 060 (74' • DDD)

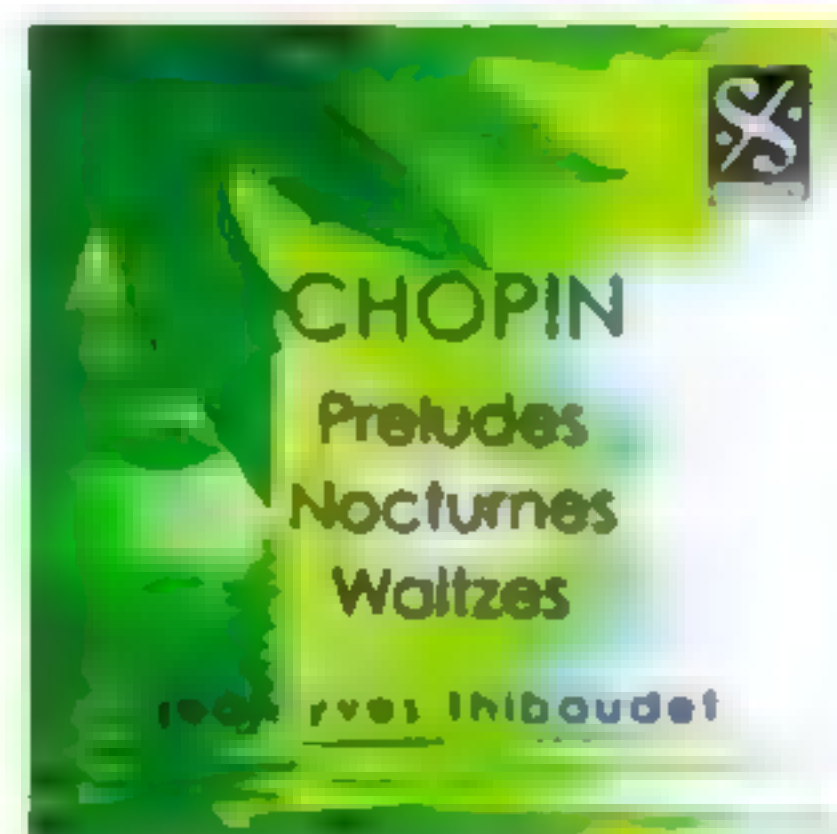
## Liszt

Faust Paraphrase. Six Consolations. Rigoletto Paraphrase. Après une lecture du Dante. Transcendental Etude No 8, 'Wilde Jagd'. Liebestraume No 3. Ballade No 2

Jean-Yves Thibaudet *pf*

Dal Segno (M) DSPRCD 061 (70' • DDD)

Pre-Decca Thibaudet on the sparkling form which bagged him the contract



Both these discs (previously unissued in the UK) were made long before Thibaudet's years at Decca, and the Liszt in particular is of an astonishing force and verve. Here he plays the virtuoso to the hilt and it is hardly surprising that his performance of the "Faust" Waltz caught the ear of Horowitz ("amazing,

such dexterity, such technique, such articulation, such command. I could not do that today"). From the opening clarion call to attention to the central glittering cascades, Thibaudet gives us all his dry-ice sparkle and the sort of ear-tingling brilliance that quickly made him the envy of so many of his colleagues. True, there is a touch of impatience in Liszt's more intimate pages (the six *Consolations* and Third *Liebestraume*) but elsewhere the overall mastery is stunning.

For Chopin, Thibaudet is suitably less overt and his selection of Nocturnes in particular makes you long for a complete set. His 24 Preludes, too, are full of character, bold and improvisatory in No 1 and, going against Chopin's grain and piano instruction, loud and menacing in No 2. He brings all of his

formidable technique to No 16's brilliant fury and an imaginative touch of wistfulness to No 18, normally a cloudless flight into the blue.

In his four chosen Waltzes he is notably convincing in the melancholy A minor and reels off the F major with all of his ultra-French brio. Both discs are well recorded but of the two the Liszt is the one to have. To quote some words – albeit in a very different context – by Robert Herrick, "O how that glittering taketh me."

Bryce Morrison

## Cimarosa

Sonatas – C2; C3; C4; C5; C9; C14; C15; C16; C17; C18; C19; C20; C21; C22; C23; C24; C25; C33; C34; C35; C36; C37; C47; C49; C50; C53; C55; C56; C58; C61 (all transc Giuliani)

Claudio Giuliani *gtr*

Brilliant Classics (S) 94172 (66' • DDD)

Grace and elegance in these keyboard sonatas transcribed for the guitar

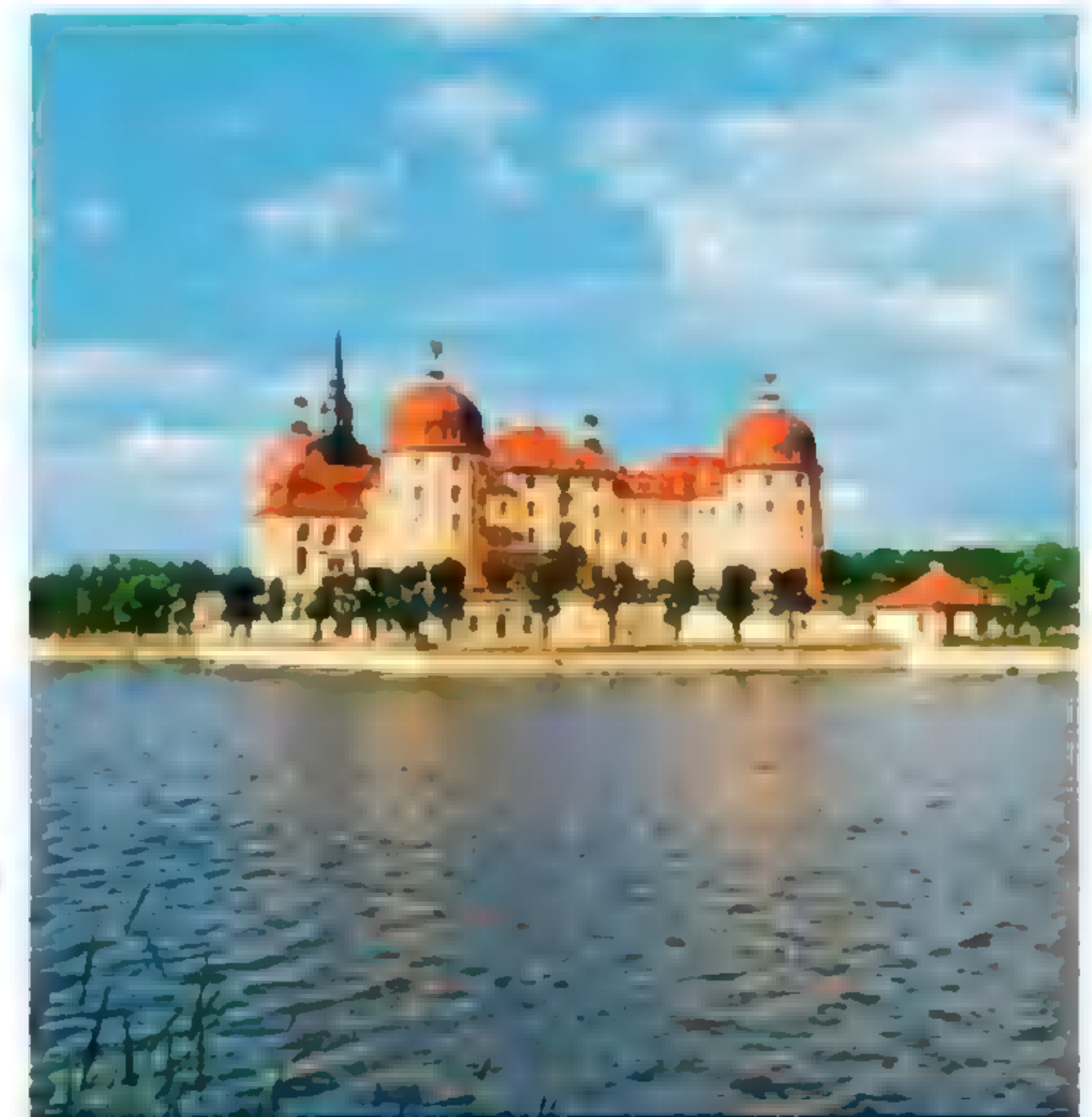


Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801) was one of the most prolific and popular opera composers of the late-18th century and it's amusing to discover

that even in the 19th century Stendhal claimed he'd rather be hanged than to say whether he preferred the music of Mozart or Cimarosa. However, and despite the growing number of performances and recordings of his operatic, orchestral and instrumental works, Cimarosa is still largely remembered through the medium of Arthur Benjamin's charming Oboe Concerto in C, based on a selection of Cimarosa's keyboard sonatas. In similar fashion, Cimarosa's spirit had for many years walked among classical guitarists, chiefly thanks to Julian Bream's arrangements of three of the keyboard sonatas.

That situation changed in 2000 with the publication of guitarist Claudio Giuliani's transcriptions of 30 of Cimarosa's sonatas, a worthy follow-up to his 1994 two-volume Scarlatti edition. Cimarosa's single-movement sonatas (there is some evidence that they were originally grouped together into two- and three-movement sonatas: see pianist Victor Sangiorgio's recording for Naxos) share many traits with Scarlatti's – binary structures, two-part textures, repeated rhythmic and melodic motifs – but Cimarosa is more obviously Classical while more reluctant to explore remote keys or develop his material.

Giuliani's playing of his own transcriptions is infused with the same grace and elegance that characterise Cimarosa's music, while demonstrating that the sonatas gain more than they lose in being transferred to the guitar, especially in terms of tonal variety. The result is a paradox: inward-looking



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## Instrumental reviews

performances that draw their strength from the colour and excitement of Cimarosa's operas and orchestral works.

William Yeoman

### Dale - Bowen

**Bowen** Miniature Suite, Op 14

**Dale** Piano Sonata. Night Fancies. Prunella

**Danny Driver** *pf*

Hyperion © CDA67827 (65' • DDD)

The epic romantic piano sonata of a contemporary of York Bowen



Here is a disc to warm the hearts and minds of those who treasure romantic nostalgia, a love "for old, unhappy, far-off things, / And battles long ago".

Benjamin Dale's hugely ambitious and unwieldy Piano Sonata (its first complete performance given by York Bowen) is assuredly not for lovers of economy, for the steely, prickly and uningratiating.

And while it is hard to imagine its survival in today's musical climate, that is, as Danny Driver so eloquently shows, surely our loss. Dedicated to Bowen (whose work suffered a similarly swift demise before its recent glamorous revival), the sonata's early champions included Moiseiwitsch, Myra Hess, Irene Scharrer and Moura Lympny (all three ladies students of Tobias Matthay).

Yet, even given such celebrity, it is doubtful that it has ever been played with a more shining commitment than by Danny Driver. His performance ranges from thundering rhetoric to a whispering poetic delicacy and when you hear him in, say, Var 2 from Dale's slow movement, you become enthralled by a pianist of such magical warmth and finesse. *Prunella* takes us from romantic epic to endearing miniature and, in a further tribute to York Bowen, Driver ends his recital with the *Miniature Suite* in C, Op 14, its *scherzo* an exit of whirling virtuoso gaiety.

Hyperion's sound and presentation are as immaculate as ever and Francis Pott's notes, where he tell us of Dale's outward similarity but subtle difference to Bowen, is a mine of information. This issue is as moving as it is superlative.

Bryce Morrison

### Liszt

Fantasia and Fugue, 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam', S259 (trans Busoni). Piano Sonata, S178

**Garrick Ohlsson** *pf*

Bridge © BRIDGE9337 (61' • DDD)

### Liszt

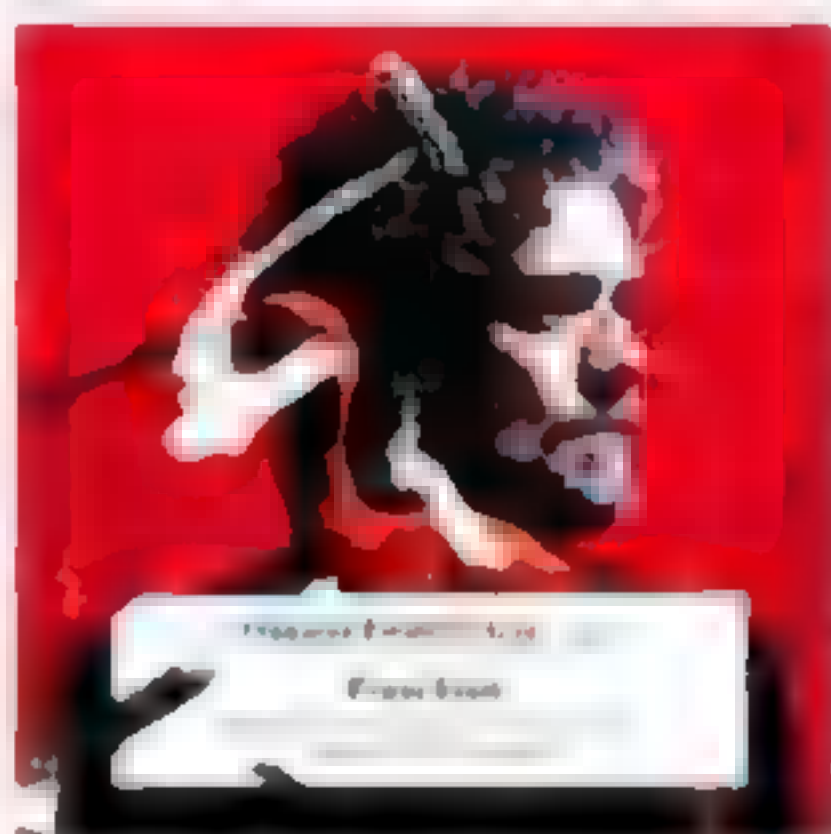
Harmonies poétiques et religieuses, S173.

Piano Sonata, S178

**François-Frédéric Guy** *pf*

Zig-Zag Territoires © 2 ZZZ110301 (129' • DDD)

### Two B minor sonatas and performances that reveal Liszt's pianistic innovations



These two albums are offered as daunting tributes to celebrate the 200th birthday of Franz Liszt. And here pride of place goes to Garrick Ohlsson's recreation of the Liszt-Busoni Fantasia and Fugue on "Ad nos, ad salutarem undam", a towering realisation of Liszt's already formidable organ original.

Weighing in with awe-inspiring strength, Ohlsson declares himself among today's most powerful pianists, making the piano the truest king of instruments. Time and again he reminds you of a description of Claudio Arrau, his one-time mentor, who could become the musical equivalent of Atlas holding the universe aloft. In the concluding pages, with their ever-increasing complexity and magnificence, he makes the listener feel as if pressed back by a massive centrifugal force. Ohlsson's Sonata, on the other hand, is relatively subdued, creating its greatest effect in the central *Andante*'s vision and introspection, and in a conclusion where hymnal piety is clouded by glassy sighs and veiled threats.

In the Sonata, François-Frédéric Guy gives us a more momentous and deeply pondered experience, and his *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* achieves a magnificent sense of how Liszt extended the piano's and indeed music's poetic possibilities into a wholly new realm and dimension. He is entralling in the "Invocation", most opulent of curtain-raisers, mystical in the "Ave Maria", a true affirmation of faith from Guy. His tempo for the "Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude" is audaciously slow yet always sustained, and he shows himself sensitive to the *Andante lagrimoso*'s striking prophecy of Fauré's final and often desolating manner. Try the central *dolcissimo* in "Cantique d'amour" and you will hear a rapt and ecstatic response to Liszt's eroticism (the other side of the religious coin?). All in all, this is a true act of musical devotion but you will need all three discs from Ohlsson and Guy to achieve the fullest sense of Liszt's astonishing range and genius. Bryce Morrison

### Liszt

Au lac de Wallenstadt, S160 No 2. Ballade No 2, S171. Consolations, S172. Harmonies du soir, S139 No 11. Hungarian Rhapsody, S244 No 3. Sonetto 104 del Petrarca, S161 No 5. Valse oubliée, S215 No 1. Waldesrauschen, S145 No 1

**Nelson Freire** *pf*



## IN THE STUDIO

### Brahms to Bruckner

The Fitzwilliam String Quartet were in the studio during April and May recording Bruckner's String Quartet and Quintet. Over two sessions at St Martin's Church in East Woodhay, Hampshire, the ensemble recorded a follow-up to their critically acclaimed recording of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet with clarinetist Lesley Schatzberger. The resulting album has just been released on Linn Records and will be reviewed in a future issue.

### Chen's Tchaikovsky

Recent "One to Watch" violinist Ray Chen has been back in the studio recording his second album for Sony. During the month of April, at the Berwaldhallen in Stockholm, Chen recorded the Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky Violin Concertos with the Swedish Radio Orchestra under Daniel Harding. The results will be released in January 2012.

### Aronowitz blitz

Following on from the success of their debut album "Climbing the Skies", which included a specially commissioned piece from Huw Watkins, the Aronowitz Ensemble are due to record their second CD for Sonimage. At the Wigmore Hall from August 17 to 19, the group of seven young artists (including Young Musician of the Year-winning cellist Guy Johnston) will record Mendelssohn's String Quintet and Dvořák's Piano Quintet No 2, alongside another specially commissioned work from Martin Suckling. The album is scheduled for release in early 2012.

### Florilegium fanfare

As part of their 20th birthday celebrations, Florilegium have recorded a Vivaldi disc for Channel Classics. In April the Baroque ensemble congregated at St John's Church, Upper Norwood, to record *Nulla in mundo* and *Laudate pueri* with soprano Elin Manahan Thomas, and the flute concerto *Il gran mogul*, discovered in Scotland last year. The album will be released in September, following two all-Bach anniversary celebrations at the Wigmore in July.

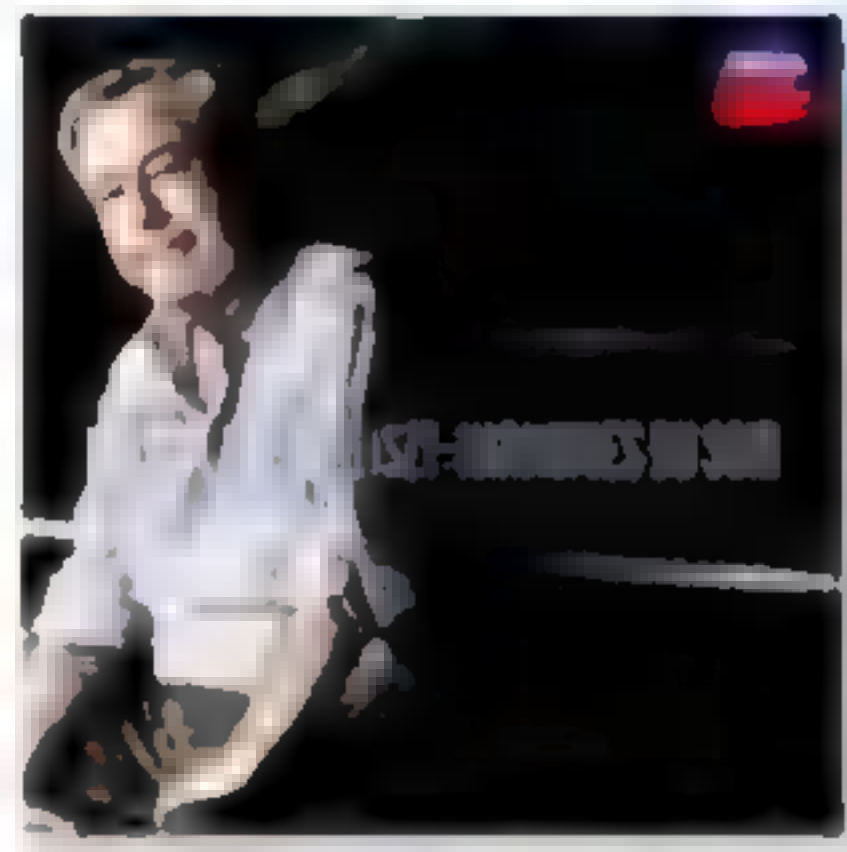
### Chameleon Ebène

Following their alternative album "Fiction", Gramophone Award-winning ensemble Quatuor Ebène have re-embraced the Classical repertoire with a recording of Mozart string quartets, again for Virgin. The foursome recorded the D minor, K421 and the *Dissonance*, K465, earlier this year at Ferme de Villefavard in France, alongside the Divertimento in F, K138. The album will be reviewed in a future issue.



Decca ④ 478 2728DH (58' • DDD)

**A magnificent contribution to the Liszt year from one of the greatest pianists**



Some piano recital discs send you scuttling to the score to check whether the composer really did write what you've just heard; others just leave you sitting there wreathed in smiles, wishing it would go on for longer. Not surprisingly given the pianist, this one falls into the latter category.

Freire's selection is a judiciously varied programme of works for which he has a particular fondness – and it shows. *Waldesrauschen* (given here unusually without its travelling companion, *Gnomensreigen*) is a masterly display of tonal and dynamic grading with acute responses to all of Liszt's explicit requests (*tre corde poco e poco più agitato*, for example, *martellato*, *strepitoso*), all the time leaving us with a sense of something left in reserve.

Such finesse is true of the whole recital. Again and again one marvels at the spontaneity of Freire's playing, his ability to think in long paragraphs and bring an almost improvisatory air to proceedings (*Valse oubliée*, the rarely featured *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 3 and all six *Consolations*). *Harmonies du soir*, rousing Freire to the heights of passion, completes the disc in triumphant style.

My only niggle is the rather too slow tempo for the *allegro moderato* section of the Ballade No 2 with the big tune that furnishes the final pages and the unaccountable cut of eight bars just afterwards – the section referred to in the notes as the inspiration for the cadenza to Grieg's Piano Concerto. But don't let such nit-picking stop you from buying this magnificent tribute to Liszt's genius. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## Reich

Electric Counterpoint. Six Marimbas Counterpoint. Vermont Counterpoint (all arr Kuniko)

**Kuniko perc**

Linn ④ CKD385 (41' • DDD/DSD)

**Reich rearranged for percussion poses something of a puzzle**



When I spoke to Steve Reich for *Gramophone's* March 2011 issue, two things became crystal clear. Firstly, that orchestration is everything to him – his 1986 orchestral *The Four Sections* is deeply compromised, he said, by the fact it's "the wrong orchestration" – and, secondly, that his intersecting patterns depend on the "matched timbres" of instrumental pairs for their harmonic clarity and rhythmic attack. Which makes

this Reich-endorsed set of *Electric Counterpoint*, *Six Marimbas* and *Vermont Counterpoint* reorchestrations a puzzle, frankly. Japanese percussionist Kuniko has traded *Electric Counterpoint's* springy, Wes Montgomery guitar texture with parts for steel pan, vibraphone and marimba; *Vermont Counterpoint*, conceived for flutes, is rearranged for vibraphone, and *Six Marimbas* is, for no sound reason I can fathom, renamed *Six Marimbas Counterpoint* as Kuniko performs all six parts, one live, the rest on pre-recorded tape.

At first I thought she was on to something: hearing *Electric Counterpoint's* opening harmonic sequence decked out with fresh instrumental paint is fun, like watching George Lazenby's Bond film. But that timbral tremble innate to steel pans soon reveals itself as inappropriate here; at 4'00" clanging overtones overwhelm the harmonic flow; and in the last movement, at 1'00", low-register marimba patterns sound oddly like a Eurhythmics bass-line.

Reich's sweet dreams were never made of this, and the problems accumulate with *Vermont Counterpoint*. I reckon the natural grain of the vibraphone has been computer-compressed to accommodate the original piccolo line – which makes Kuniko's vibraphone shrill and manufactured, and gives the rhythmic impetus a stilted and artificial feel. Listen to the weirdly mechanistic tempo changes at 4'54" and 7'00", then tell me I'm wrong.

**Philip Clark**

## Ries

Piano Sonatas – Op 9 No 1; Op 141

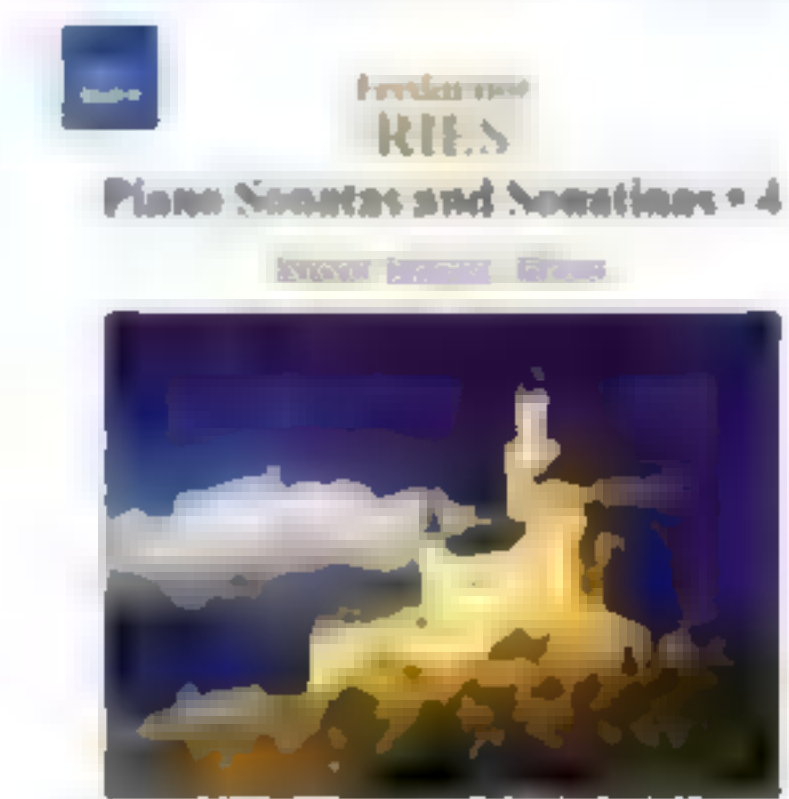
**Susan Kagan pf**

Naxos ④ 8 572299 (59' • DDD)

*Op 9 No 1 – selected comparisons:*

Oehler (CPO) CPO777 136-2

**Beethoven's pupil played with his own spirit of dependability**



The forgotten works of Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838), well served lately by both CPO and Naxos, are of variable quality and interest, all too often justifying his friend and mentor Beethoven's observation that "he imitates me too much". An early edition of Grove admits that technically great as was much that Ries composed, "that indescribable something, that touch of nature, which in music as elsewhere makes the whole world kin, was wanting."

The present two works are a case in point. The three-movement D major Sonata (1808 lasting 30 minutes) with the shadows of Beethoven in particular, Weber and Clementi falling heavily over the accomplished and often charming handling of the material,

fails to establish an individual voice, the counterpoint and canon in the slow movement and the expressive theme and eight variations of the last movement notwithstanding. In the likeable A flat Sonata (1826, 28'35"), Ries seems to have been studying a lot of Schubert and Hummel in the outer movements while the central Adagio is almost pastiche Beethoven.

I have not heard the three earlier volumes of Ries's sonatas and sonatinas from Susan Kagan but here her playing is rock solid and dependable with a faint whiff of pedagogy, in a different league to the crusading spirit of Christopher Hinterhuber in Ries's concertos (also on Naxos), and less alluring in the D major Sonata than the excellent Alexandra Oehler on CPO, where, in addition, each variation is given its own track. The finale of the Op 141 stretches Ms Kagan somewhat. Well recorded with an excellent booklet by the pianist.

**Jeremy Nicholas**

## Schubert

Piano Sonatas – No 4, D537; No 13, D664.

Fantasy, 'Wandererfantasie', D760

**Eldar Nebolsin pf**

Naxos ④ 8 572459 (62' • DDD)

*Sonatas – selected comparisons:*

Zacharias (EMI) 565483-2

*Wanderer Fantasy – selected comparison:*

Richter (A/O3) (BBCL) BBCL4126-2

**Energetic but unsmiling playing: is Nebolsin a natural Schubertian?**



This is a disc that ranges far, from Schubert at his most *gemütlich* (the first movement of the A major Sonata, D664) to his most driven (the *Wanderer Fantasy*). And in D537 there's a mix of both, an initially stern opening leading to music that melts the heart.

So it takes an artist of real breadth of expression to bring across each work with conviction. Eldar Nebolsin is a big pianist in every sense, Russian-born and trained, and winner of the inaugural Sviatoslav Richter Piano Competition in 2005. He is undaunted by the immense demands of the *Wanderer* in a performance of considerable power that revels in the granitic chordal writing and culminates in a fugue of almost bludgeoning power.

Turn to Richter in this work – taking a visceral live version, complete with its share of wrong notes – and you find the chordal writing imbued with an even more violent momentum but also a compensatory melting quality in the more inward passages. It's a performance of extremes but ultimately it has more humanity than Nebolsin's. For a more Classical approach, try Brendel (Philips – nla), airier in texture and with a virtuoso fugue that never becomes oppressive. Nebolsin's over-





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### EDITOR'S CHOICE-

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Hanssler HAEN 93272 (3 CDs) ..... £37.99  
BEETHOVEN: Piano Sonatas 8, 17 & 23; Ingrid Fliter  
EMI 094 5732 ..... £10.99  
CHOPIN: Piano Concertos; Barenboim/Staatskapelle Dresden/Nelsons  
DG 477 9520 ..... £12.99  
DENNEHY: Gra Argus Bras; Upshaw/O'Lionaird/Crash Ensemble/etc  
Nonesuch 7559 797727 ..... £12.99  
DONIZETTI: Linda di Chamounix; Gutierrez/Tezier/etc; ROH/Elder  
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"English Spring" (Bax/Delius/Bridge); Halle/Elder  
Halle CDHLL 7528 ..... £12.99  
LISZT: Harmonies du Soir; Nelson Freire  
Decca 478 2728 ..... £12.99  
LOEWE: Songs & Ballads; Boesch/Vignoles  
Hyperion CDA 67866 ..... £12.99  
MARTIN: Der Sturm; Soloists/Netherlands RPO/Fischer  
Hyperion CDA 67821/3 (3 CDs) ..... £31.99  
DVD - MOZART: Don Giovanni; Finley/Royal/Jurowski (Glyndebourne 2010)  
EMI 072 0179 (2 DVDs) ..... £17.99

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### OUR PICK OF THE MONTH'S NEW RELEASES

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Nonesuch 7559 798008 ..... £12.99  
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Philharmonia Baroque PBP 01 ..... £12.99  
"Beyond all mortal dreams" (American a cappella); Trinity College/Layton  
Hyperion CDA 67832 ..... £12.99  
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E&OE





resonant acoustic does him few favours. But more than that, I'm unconvinced that he is a natural Schubertian. Sample the slightly faster Christian Zacharias in the *cantabile* slow movement of D537 and you find a sonorous warmth that is lacking in the Naxos set. Nebolsin is better suited to the more driven moments but it's all a little unsmiling. Ultimately it's akin to looking at a black-and-white photo of a Cézanne still life. The contours are strongly defined but at the cost of the endlessly fascinating detail.

Harriet Smith

## 'Fantasies & Impromptus'

**Fauré** Une châtelaine en sa tour, Op 110.

Impromptu, Op 86 **Glière** Impromptu

**Pierné** Impromptu-caprice, Op 9 **Roussel**

Impromptu, Op 21 **Saint-Saëns** Fantaisie,

Op 95 **Spohr** Fantaisie, Op 35. Variations on

Mehul's 'Je suis encore dans mon printemps',

Op 36 **Verdalle** Impromptu No 2 **Snoer**

Fantasy on the Dutch Folksong

'Wien Neerlandsch bloed'

Lavinia Meijer *hp*

Channel Classics © CCSSA31711 (72' • DDD)

A suitably fine collection of mainly French music for the harp



Lavinia Meijer here offers a delightful sequence of pieces for solo harp by mostly French composers. The harp has long been a favourite instrument in

France and it was a Frenchman, Sébastien Erard, who, in the early years of the 19th century, introduced the double-action harp, so allowing a full chromatic range of notes to be played. All these pieces in different ways exploit that development.

Meijer opens with the *Impromptu-caprice* of Gabriel Pierné, who was persuaded to write this charming piece for a harp competition in 1885, introducing a display of fireworks. It was more predictable that Louis Spohr would write for the harp as he married a harpist, who inspired this *Fantaisie*, a set of variations on "Je suis encore dans mon printemps", a melody taken from an opera by Méhul.

Saint-Saëns's *Fantaisie* was written in 1895, commissioned, like the Pierné, to be played at a harp competition. This, too, is charming, with plenty of arpeggio work and some exquisite *pianissimos*, beautifully played. The Impromptu of Fauré was inspired by a poem of Verlaine, "Une châtelaine en sa tour", with broken chords and hints of medieval music.

Gabriel Verdalle and Johannes Snoer were both harpists who wrote pieces for their own use, not great works but ones which effectively exploit the harp's potential. One can imagine that both Verdalle's tuneful Impromptu No 2 and Snoer's *Variations on a Dutch Folksong* are very attractive to virtuosos.

Albert Roussel's Impromptu is a spectacular piece specifically written for the great French harpist of the interwar years, Lily Laskine, while the easily tuneful Impromptu of Reinhold Glière illustrates in its approachability how he managed to survive throughout the Soviet era. An excellent collection for anyone who loves the harp.

Edward Greenfield

## 'Monologue'

**Bořkovec** Sonata **Klusák** Monologue

'Ubi vult'. Partita **Smolka** The Mist of

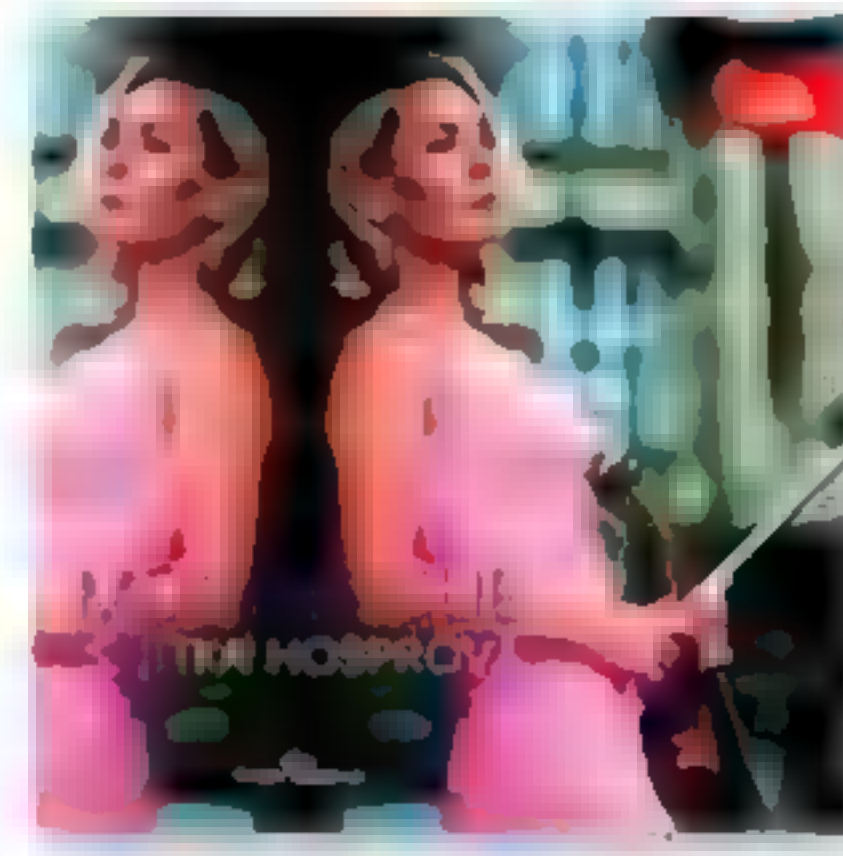
Depression **Vycpálek** Suite, Op 21

Jitka Hosprová *va*

Supraphon © SU4049-2 (61' • DDD)

Unusual Czech repertoire

for viola, passionately played



Lacking as they do the extensive Classical and Romantic solo repertoire enjoyed by violinists and cellists, viola players

are often on the lookout for new pieces.

Jitka Hosprová has put together an interesting programme of Czech music and gives convincing accounts of all five works, distinguished by fine, robust tone and emotional commitment. She has got under the skin of each piece, finding a connection between its style and her own passionate manner of performance.

Pavel Bořkovec's Sonata (1931) combines straightforward rhythms with more complex melodic and harmonic formulations. It's a strong work, suggesting in places the idiom of Hindemith. The Suite by Ladislav Vycpálek (1929) is considerably more expressionistic and virtuosic. Its finale relies too much on a not-very-distinguished motif; otherwise it's a powerful piece with a striking slow movement – a low-lying cantilena interspersed with enigmatic double-stops in a higher register.

The most unusual work is Jan Klusák's *Monologue* (1987), in effect a 21-minute cadenza. Somehow, Klusák manages to sustain interest without any very clear structural guidelines, and Hosprová, with her excellent sense of timing, creates an illusion of spontaneous improvisation.

The highlight of the programme, for me, is the *The Mist of Depression* by Jaroslav Smolka. Dating from 1985 and taking as its starting-point Smetana's final sketch for his projected *Twelfth Night* opera (which was to be called *Viola*), Smolka projects a ferocious air of desperation and dislocation – a feeling of trying in vain to maintain mental clarity. The final detuning of the instrument has a devastating effect.

Duncan Druce

## 'Piano Works by The Mighty Handful'

**Balakirev** Islamey **Borodin** Petite Suite.

Scherzo **Cui** Nocturne, Op 22 No 3

**Mussorgsky** Pictures at an Exhibition

**Rimsky-Korsakov** Scherzino, Op 11 No 3.

Three Pieces, Op 15 – No 1, Valse;

No 2, Romance

Philip Edward Fisher *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10676 (81' • DDD)

Music by Russia's Famous Five that needs greater range and incisiveness



Whatever command and authority that pianist Philip Edward Fisher brought to his excellent Naxos recording of Handel's

Keyboard Suites last year, he hits and misses in Russian music. Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* needs far more dynamic range than Fisher is willing to concede, while his casual observance of details and diffident sense of transition add up to interpretative vagueness and a rather bland whole.

The ferociously dispatched final measures of "Gnomus" would have been more effective had Fisher truly accelerated over the course of those preceding bass-register trills. "Il vecchio castello" is slow enough to be a sunken cathedral. "Bydlo" is not so relentlessly steady and concentrated as it ought to be.

Then there's Fisher's laboured repeated notes and enervated opening theme in "Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle", so different from Yefim Bronfman's decisive declamation and fluidity. Why does Fisher start the ostinato pattern of "The Market Place at Limoges" a shade under the tempo into which he settles? Here Bronfman's suppleness and cumulative power prove superior, not to mention Ashkenazy, Berman, Rudy and Richter. The way to build and maintain momentum in the opening octaves of "Baba-Yaga" is to keep them steady and observe the accents and dynamic indications. In this regard Fisher's little speed-ups serve no clear expressive purpose.

Fisher's largely undifferentiated touch wears thin throughout *Islamey*, which lacks the lightness, contrast and diablerie typifying the work's best long-playing era recordings (Katchen, Pletnev, Campanella, to name a few). He rounds off the Cui Nocturne's edges and undersells the playful rhythmic snap of the Borodin Petite Suite's two mazurka movements. However, he comes to life as he dispatches the rapid passagework in Borodin's Scherzo and Rimsky-Korsakov's Scherzino with effortless, feathery élan and gorgeous dabs of tone colour.

An uneven release, all told. **Jed Distler**



# Vocal

Head-to-head Mozart Requiems • Wolf from Gerhaer • Poulenc song survey launches

## JS Bach

'Cantatas, Vol 48'

Cantatas – No 34, O ewiges Feuer, o Ursprung der Liebe; No 98, Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan; No 117, Sei Lob und Ehr dem höchsten Gut; No 120, Gott, man lobet dich in der Stille

Hana Blažiková *sop* Robin Blaze *countertenor* Satoshi Mizukoshi *ten* Peter Kooij *bass* Bach Collegium Japan / Masaaki Suzuki

BIS (E) BIS-SACD1881 (72' • DDD • T/t)

**Four late works, strongly projected, with some mellifluous alto arias**



Dating cantatas from Bach's later years remains an indeterminate business, not least because their creation played a rather more occasional part in

the composer's life during the final couple of decades than the frenzied activity of Leipzig in the early to mid-1720s. Lost works, fewer hooks, and adaptations from missing secular models all conspire to chronological uncertainty. This is the case in at least one of these four mature works, *O ewiges Feuer*, where a recently discovered libretto places its premiere a good 15 years earlier than the 1742 of a later revision.

As with the second version of Bach's three cantata settings of *Was Gott tut* (BWV98-100), this graphic Whitsun work is given a sturdy performance from Bach Collegium Japan. The compelling juxtaposition of the crackling fire of the Holy Spirit and soaring eternity leaves us less satisfied in the virtuoso opening chorus (try Gardiner on Archiv for blistering heat here) than in Bach's skilful transformation of "Wohl euch" from a secular "slumber aria" into an intimate spiritual devotion. Robin Blaze is at his most ringing, mellifluous and assuaging here.

Yet Masaaki Suzuki's strength lies in summoning up a world from the text and a sense of believing it (if not always in its capacity to enable a performance to fly far from its stylistic boundaries). This he does with supreme elegance and luminosity in *Sei Lob und Ehr*, a superb chorale cantata in which the hymn text remains unaltered throughout, with some distinguished if small-scale singing from tenor Satoshi Mizukoshi. "Was unser

Gott" evokes God's creative sleight of hand which Suzuki accompanies with a graceful but unobtrusive continuo under delectably mellow wind dialogues. The languid and delicate tone is extended in another glorious alto aria, "Ich will dich all mein Leben", accompanied by flautist Liliko Maeda.

If that work is evidence of Bach's gradual move towards a more finely etched and economic style, the simple beauty of *Gott, man lobet dich* (yes, with another storming alto aria) lies in the entrancing "Heil und Segen" for soprano and obbligato violin. It is sung exquisitely by Hana Blažiková and caps another consistently fine performance in the late autumn of Suzuki's steadily impressive marathon.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

## Campra

Requiem. In convertendo. Agnus Dei  
Robert Getchell, Jean-François Novelli, Marc Labonnette *tens* Les Pages et les Chantres du Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles; Orchestre des Musiques Anciennes et à Venir / Olivier Schneebeli

K617 (E) K617 224 (60' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live, October 2010

**Exuberant and inventive sacred works by a master of music at Versailles**



This Radio France recording was made, fittingly, in the Royal Chapel at Versailles Palace, the venue where André Campra served as *sous-maître* from 1723 until his death at the grand old age of 83.

With his Provençal, Franco-Italian parentage, Campra's main claim to musical fame is that he introduced France to a new genre, the *opéra-ballet*, at the end of the 17th century, in addition to composing a good deal of other music for the stage.

His smaller body of sacred choral music is less well known but – judging by the obvious relish with which this disc has been produced – worthy of more than an occasional hearing. The plaintive cry of the solo serpent kicks off the substantial Requiem, which – cast in 16 movements – is, by turns, lyrical, exuberant and invariably inventive. The refreshingly uncluttered choral writing is nicely supported by a small, mixed wind-string band that includes lute, flute and recorder. One of

Campra's *grands motets*, *In convertendo*, shows another facet of his gracious style, with some attractive solo writing. The disc concludes with an alternative, foreshortened version of the Requiem's *Agnus Dei*, sung by tenor Jean-François Novelli who, together with his fellow *choristes*, occasionally adopts a curious (to English ears), chewed-up Latin pronunciation. This is but a small quibble, since Schneebeli's Orchestre des Musiques Anciennes et à Venir play splendidly, with great elegance and panache. Another plus is that the audience remains silent throughout (save for the appreciative applause). Lavishly illustrated, this is a handsome and convincing production.

Malcolm Riley

## Dennehy

Grá agus Bás<sup>a</sup>. That the Night Come<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Dawn Upshaw *sop* <sup>a</sup>Iarla Ó Lionáird *sngtr*

Crash Ensemble / Alan Pierson

Nonesuch (E) 7559 27063-2 (59' • DDD)

**Beautiful, lyrical song-cycles, a far cry from Dennehy's frenetic earlier music**



Donnacha Dennehy dispenses with the giddy, visceral urban techno avant-gardism of *Elastic Harmonic* (NMC, 9/07) for a far more personal and

lyrical tone on this recording. As its title suggests, *Grá agus Bás* ("Love and Death", 2007), engages in a more direct way with the composer's Irish folk roots. An ambitious song-cycle in one continuous movement lasting 25 minutes, it gradually builds up towards a quite extraordinary climax. Sustained by the haunting, plangent vocal projections of singer Iarla Ó Lionáird, Dennehy draws upon the Irish Sean Níos tradition for the cycle's musical material, taking two traditional songs and imbuing the work with their melodic and rhythmic characteristics. The result is a powerful symbiosis of old and new: modal inflections and reflections driven forward by muscular post-minimalist patterns and processes.

However, it is the other song-cycle on Dennehy's debut recording for Nonesuch that will raise most eyebrows among those familiar with the composer's previous work. *That the Night Come* (2010) is an evocative set of six songs by WB Yeats, which sounds a million





# A Requiem FROM THE HEART

Corboz and the moving realities behind Gounod's setting



## Gounod

Requiem. Messe Chorale

**Charlotte Müller-Perrier** *sop* **Valerie Bonnard**

*contr* **Christophe Einhorn** *ten* **Christian Immler**

*bass* **Lausanne Vocal and Instrumental**

**Ensemble / Michel Corboz**

Mirare © MIR129 (63' • DDD)



Today's average music lover might be hard-pushed to name more than perhaps half a dozen of Gounod's works, although they would

include *Faust*, the charming *Petite symphonie* for winds, his *Ave Maria* confection, based on the first of Bach's "48", and the *Funeral March of a Marionette* (appropriated by Hitchcock for his TV series). Choral societies occasionally perform his early *St Cecilia Mass* but this is just the tip of a substantial choral output that includes 10 *Missae breves*, eight solemn Masses and four Requiem settings. The recording reviewed here presents a striking contrast between that composed with deliberate academic austerity and a swansong tinged by highly personal circumstances.

The solemn Mass in G minor of 1888 can be disposed of quickly. It adheres

strictly to the "Palestrinian style" and was composed while Gounod was inspired by a visit to the monastery at Solemnes. Scored for choir and two organs, it runs its course in a charmingly predictable manner.

Of much greater interest is the Requiem of 1893, completed shortly before the composer's death. It was inspired by the death, four years earlier, of Gounod's five-year-old grandson, Maurice, and is heard

here in the chamber version made posthumously by Henri Busser for harp, string quintet and organ. This is a gem of a piece, providing the stylistic link between the earlier Fauré setting and successors such as Duruflé and Desenclos. The recording (made in a converted granary in the Limousin) is superb and this benchmark performance exemplary. Do try.

**Malcolm Riley**

## INTERVIEW

### Michel Corboz

Death is one of the most moving and troubling concepts to consider for any human being. I certainly feel moved by it and there's no reason to believe Gounod wouldn't have felt the same way. We know his grandson had died at the time he wrote his Requiem, which was obviously a very profound experience for him. But maybe Gounod thinks of his own death in this piece, too. That's something that I can sense when I perform it, at least to an extent.

It's important to remember the composer's faith in that context. He was a man of very considerable religious faith; sacred compositions abound in his catalogue and are of a particularly striking quality. We know him from his operas and ballets, but there's discernable emotion and feeling in his sacred works, for all their elegance and beauty.

Perhaps César Frank tends towards the sentimental in a piece like his *The Seven Last Words of Christ*, but Gounod never does - he always maintains that elegance and poise; that discipline. Perhaps it's connected to his very thorough knowledge of counterpoint and his respect for the compositional traditions of the church. In the Solemn Mass of 1888 for choir and two organ accompaniment - which we also recorded for this CD - you hear particularly how well Gounod deals with the science of writing horizontally. That's more significant than any change in musical language.

It remains a mystery to me why we've missed the inherent quality and satisfaction in this music by Gounod for so many years. It's an unfortunate fate of the era and fashions in which we live, but at last we are beginning to address it.

**Interview by Andrew Mellor**



## Vocal reviews

miles away from the unhinged discordant swagger of *Glamour Sleeper* on the NMC disc. Soprano Dawn Upshaw is in commanding form throughout, thriving especially on those moments of tender and ambiguous reflection, as heard in the soaring and swooping "The White Birds". Ably accompanied throughout by Alan Pierson and the Crash Ensemble, this recording suggests that there is still a lot of beautiful music to be written out there, and that Dennehy is more than capable of writing it.

**Pwyll ap Siôn**

## Lassus

Ave verum corpus. Musica Dei donum optimi. St Matthew Passion, 'Passio Domini nostri Jesu Christi secundum Matthaeum. Vide homo

Nicholas Mulroy *ten* Evangelist

Greg Skidmore *bar* Christus

Ex Cathedra Consort / Jeffrey Skidmore

Somm © SOMMCD0106 (63' • DDD • T/t)

**An austere Passion, the first and the most intricate of Lassus's four**



For those brought up on the richly decorative canvases of Schütz and Bach, the responsorial style of Passion that preceded them takes some getting used to.

The words of Christ and the Evangelist are set to plainsong. Only the responses of the other actors in the story – Peter, Pilate, the crowd – are elaborated with original music. Victoria's two settings are occasionally encountered within the liturgy of the Triduum; those by Lassus are no longer in the repertoire of English church choirs, if ever they were.

Lassus set all four of the Gospel Passions; this is his first (published in 1575) and most intricately worked, reflecting the uniquely imagistic detail of Matthew's account. But it's all relative: how will you listen to this disc? If you're seeking not an aid to private devotion but a musical experience, you may be disappointed by the infrequency and brevity of Lassus's interventions, at least until we reach Peter's denial and Pilate's musings.

Patience: I think the performance does everything it can to bridge the chasm between a bare church on Good Friday and your listening room at your leisure. Nicholas Mulroy's narration is pacy but not rushed, and no less conversationally authoritative than his participation in the Dunedin Consort's recording of Bach's setting. As Christ, Greg Skidmore (author of the excellent booklet-notes) is more measured and more plausible within a strictly liturgical context (which this isn't, despite the sympathetic acoustic of All Saints, Gospel Oak).

Lassus the polyphonist, master of deftly sketched and no less exquisitely relieved chromatic pain, finally appears in three very

late motets. Contextual relief must account for some of their effect but much more is owed to Ex Cathedra and Jeffrey Skidmore: vigorously shaped, powerfully directed singing that hits you right between the eyes. **Peter Quantrill**

## Loewe

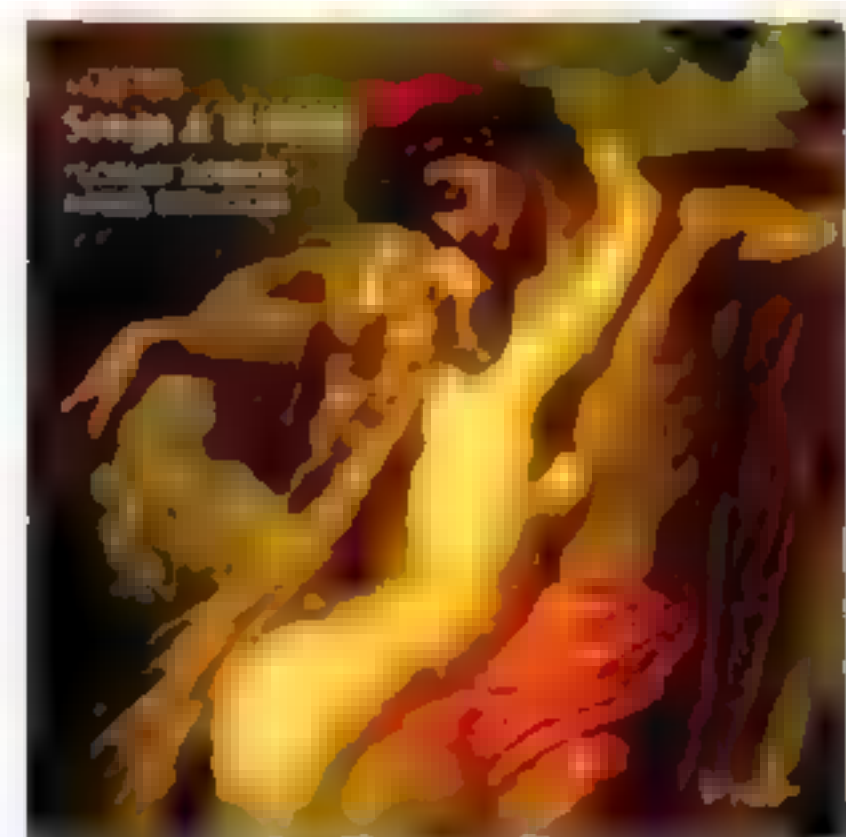
'Songs and Ballads'

Drei Balladen, Op 1. Drei Balladen, Op 2 – No 2, Herr Oluf. Gesammelte Lieder, Op 9 – Book 1 No 3a, Über allen Gipfeln is Ruh'; Book 1 No 3b, Der du von dem Himmel bist; Book 6 No 5, Graf Eberstein; Book 8 No 3, Lynceus, der Thürmer, auf Fausts Sternwarte singend. Drei Balladen, Op 20 – No 3, Die wandelnde Glocke. 12 Gedichte, Op 62 – Book 1 No 4, Süßes Begräbnis; Book 1 No 5, Hinkende Jamben. Im Vorübergehen, Op 81 No 1. Der Pilgrim vor St Just, Op 99 No 3. Odins Meeresritt, oder Der Schmied auf Helgoland, Op 118. Die Uhr, Op 123 No 3. Tom der Reimer, Op 135a, Op 1 No 3. Fünf Lieder, Op 145 – No 1, Meeresleuchten; No 3, Im Sturme; No 4, Heimlichkeit; No 5, Reiterlied

Florian Boesch *bar* Roger Vignoles *pf*

Hyperion © CDA67866 (61' • DDD • T/t)

**A song-writing contemporary of Schubert with a gift for melody**



Carl Loewe was born just two months before his famous contemporary and consequently dubbed by the Viennese "the north German Schubert". He was to become famous as a

composer/recitalist throughout the provincial capitals of Europe; in 1847 he visited London and sang at court, with Prince Albert turning the pages. He was most celebrated as the composer of narrative ballads and his version of Goethe's "Erlkönig", less searingly dramatic than Schubert's but still very telling, was preferred by Wagner.

Loewe's writing is perhaps less sophisticated than Schubert's but, like him, he had a supremely appealing melodic gift, apparent throughout all the songs and ballads included here. The present collection opens dramatically with a translation of a grisly Scottish ballad, "Edward" (who confesses to murder), and also includes the more light-hearted "Tom der Reimer", where the hero is ensnared by a beautiful temptress and rides off with her to the sound of tinkling silver bells (a favourite device of the composer). "Herr Oluf" encounters evil elves who ensure his doom, and meeting the Erlking's daughter seals his fate.

Of course there are lighter tales too. "Im Vorübergehen" pictures a flower that cannot be picked but the delighted observer walks on, so happy. Perhaps the most charming is "Die Uhr", telling of a clock that mirrors the changing events of a human

lifetime and finally stops of its own accord. Many of the other simple settings are meltingly lovely, not least the pair of "Wandrer's Nachtlied" set to emotive texts by Goethe – quite painful in the sense of the latter – and the four contrasted closing excerpts from Op 145 which provide a ravishing end to the recital.

As for the singing, I cannot praise it too highly. Florian Boesch has a warmly attractive baritone voice and his diction is first class, as is his response to the word meanings. Roger Vignoles's accompaniments, too, give great pleasure in themselves, especially in the pictorial devices which Loewe so relishes. The recording, as we expect from Hyperion, is first-class, as is the documentation and provision of translated texts. If you are new to Loewe's music, I do urge you to try this richly rewarding CD. You won't be disappointed.

**Ivan March**

## Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde

Cornelia Kallisch *mez* Siegfried Jerusalem *ten*

South West German Radio Symphony

Orchestra, Baden-Baden and Freiburg /

Michael Gielen

Hänssler Classic © CD93 269 (63' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded 1992-2002

## Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde

Fritz Wunderlich *ten* Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau

*bar* Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Josef Krips

DG © 477 8988GH (63' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Musikverein, Vienna, June 1964

*Selected comparisons:*

Ludwig, Wunderlich, Philb, Klemperer

(1/67<sup>8</sup>) (EMI) 566892-2

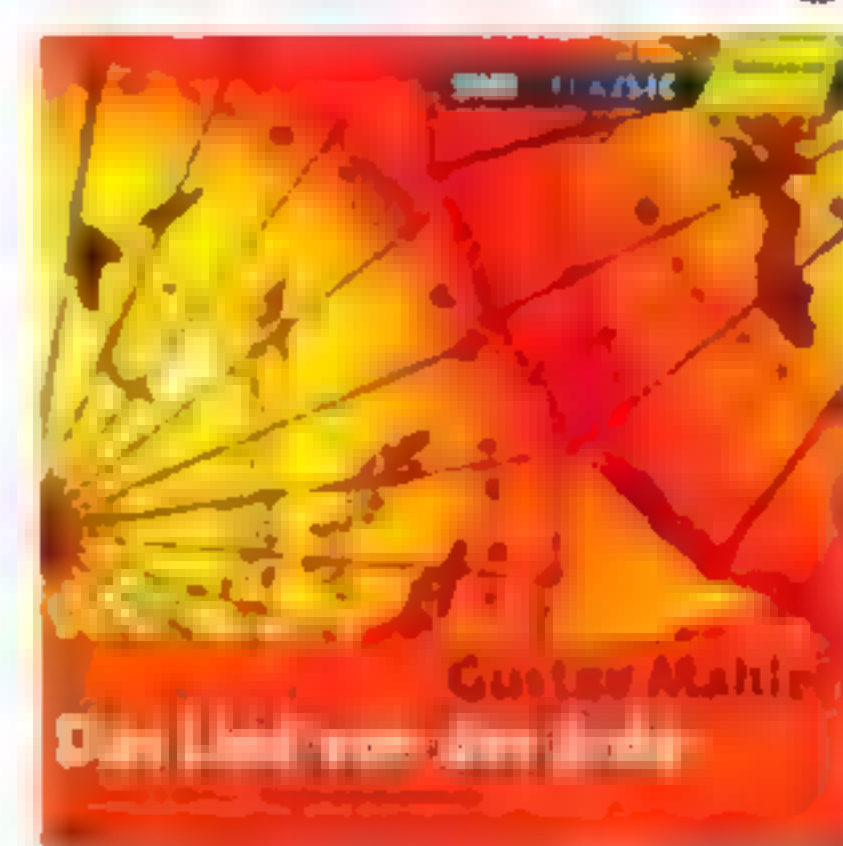
Meier, Jerusalem, Chicago SO, Barenboim

(4/92<sup>8</sup>) (APEX) 2564 67540-0

Norman, Jerusalem, BPO, Levine (8/98) (DG) 439 9482GH

Urmana, Schade, VPO, Boulez (4/01) (DG) 469 5262GH

**Songs of the Earth old and (nearly) new that mirror changes in interpretation**



Here are two performances that, when placed side by side, shed little light on each other (why should they?) but rather more on the restless politics of interpretation (whether we are musicians or listeners, or even both). Gielen's recording stretches the definition of "performance" to its elastic limits. He conducted *Das Lied* with Jerusalem and Doris Soffel at the Bonn Beethoven Festival in September 1991. Soffel may have joined everyone else in the studios three months later (I don't know) but her steely, emphatic



contribution to the concert as broadcast offers its own reasons why Gielen might seek a replacement, though not why he should take a decade to find one (and Hänssler a further decade to issue the result).

Meanwhile DG has issued, on the face of it, a far more authentic document, of one night in Vienna in 1964. Previously unreleased, claims the company, but I've heard two previous transfers, each as murky as their sources. This one is much clearer and much, much closer. Wind soloists are in your left pocket, Melodiya-style. On the older transfers the effort of the two singers' projection was palpable and, therefore, so too was the responsive hush that gradually settled over the Musikverein. Little of all that is left when Fischer-Dieskau croons in your lap.

Taking these consumer advisories into account, both Wunderlich and Jerusalem squash the idea that only a Heldenentenor can cut through Mahler's outsize orchestration in the first song. Jerusalem is in much freer voice than he was for Levine (a sleepy portmanteau with Jessye Norman), and at greater liberty than he was under Barenboim's headlong rush to offer more than blustering rage in the first song, but Wunderlich is in a class of his own. No one else raises self-pity to noble contemplation (implausible, but the more heroic and Mahlerian for all that) as he does in the first and fifth songs. No one else steps over the little bridge to squeeze into the third song's china pavilion without breaking something along the way. Adherents to Klemperer's classic studio recording may need no persuading but even they should hear both Wunderlich and Fischer-Dieskau in concert in Bamberg in April 1964, 10 weeks before the Viennese document under review and last seen on Myto. The conductor is Joseph Keilberth, who is both more attentive to his singers and more flexible, more symphonic in shaping the longer movements than Krips.

No less than Keilberth, Gielen delights in Wagnerian instrumental detail such as the chill wind blowing through the second song, but shares with Klemperer and Boulez an approach that's spare of intervention and the more unsparing in expressive force. The climax of the last song's funeral march is *fortissimo* not in volume but a suppressed inner strength. Kallisch is at one with him, less plush than Urmana for Boulez. Fischer-Dieskau for Krips brings total identification with the artist who scatters jade dust over the second song. Kallisch is plainer, but all the more believable when she declares "My heart is weary". She and Gielen offer precious little consolation at the cycle's close: no lachrymose haze and no modernist dissolve, but a steady view of the spiralling harp arpeggios that close the Tenth's *Adagio*. **Peter Quanttrill**

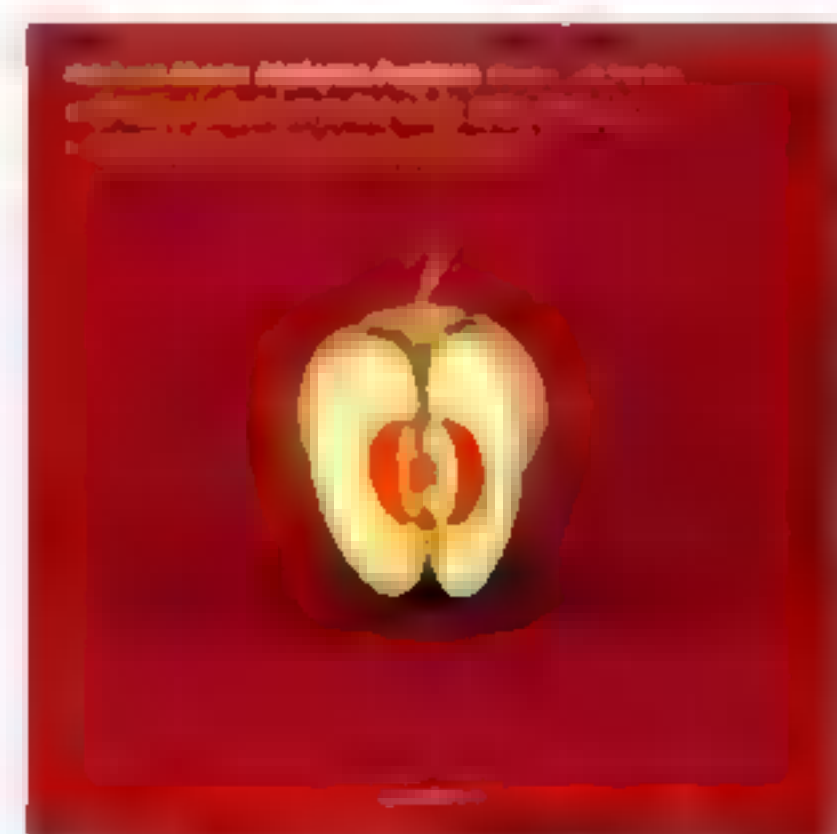
## Maier

*Atalanta fugiens*

**Ensemble Plus Ultra** (Grace Davidson *sop*  
Clare Wilkinson *contr* Warren Trevelyan-Jones  
ten Giles Underwood *bass* Stephen Jones *erhu*  
Sue Addison *sack* Marie Bournisien *hp*) /  
**Michael Noone**

Glossa Platinum © GCDP31407 (72' • DDD • T/t)

**'Gesamtkunstwerk' 250 years  
before Wagner: delightfully weird**



This must be one of the strangest recordings I've ever reviewed. Michael Maier (d1622) was one of the most distinguished figures at the court of Rudolf II

in Prague. His *Atalanta fugiens* reflects a late-Renaissance world view wherein everything in human experience and the natural world (including alchemy) could still be connected. But Maier was not primarily a musician: 50 highly arcane epigrams (emblems) expound a series of propositions, each of which is illustrated with a woodcut and a short fugue for two voices over a cantus firmus (always the same one, 50 times over!).

In the booklet-notes it is suggested that Maier sought in these pieces to hark back to a medieval style, making this perhaps the first "neo-medieval" music ever composed. The fact that Maier habitually flouts contrapuntal rules may bear out the suggestion, unless his technical grasp was simply tenuous. Whether it mattered what it sounded like we may never know. It mattered more to him and his readers that music, an audible reflection of the cosmos, was included in his intellectual programme. None the less, the repetition of the plainsong melody, heard well over 100 times, has a weird magic all its own.

Ensemble Plus Ultra deserve to be congratulated for their bold initiative in bringing this odd music to life. They match strangeness for strangeness in dividing the three voices between four singers, a sackbut, a Renaissance harp and...an erhu, a Chinese string instrument with two bowed strings (also known as the "southern fiddle" or "Chinese two-stringed fiddle") that sounds like a cross between a flute and a cornetto. Maier, striving as he was after universal truths, would surely have approved.

These are consummately played, whereas the singers, faced with Maier's frequently outlandish textures and lines, seem at times unsure and strained, as though searching for the right timbre and tone (to be fair, at other times they sound entirely relaxed). These criticisms may be cast aside if you enter into the spirit of the thing, though enthusiasts of "classical" church polyphony are likely to be baffled. How many more times I will listen to

this recording I'm not sure; but as a party piece with which to test friends' ingenuity it'll be hard to beat. A shame that the reproductions of the woodcuts generously included in the booklet are too small to be easily viewed (though they can be sought out with relative ease on the internet).

**Fabrice Fitch**

## Mozart

Requiem, K626<sup>a</sup>. Ave verum corpus, K618<sup>b</sup>. Sancta Maria, mater Dei, K273<sup>b</sup>. Exsultate, jubilate, K165<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Sara Macliver *sop* <sup>a</sup>Sally-Anne Russell *mez*

<sup>a</sup>Paul McMahon *ten* <sup>a</sup>Teddy Tahu Rhodes  
*bass-bar* <sup>ab</sup>Cantillation; Orchestra of the  
Antipodes / Anthony Walker

ABC Classics © ABC476 4064 (69' • DDD • T/t)

## Mozart

Requiem, K626

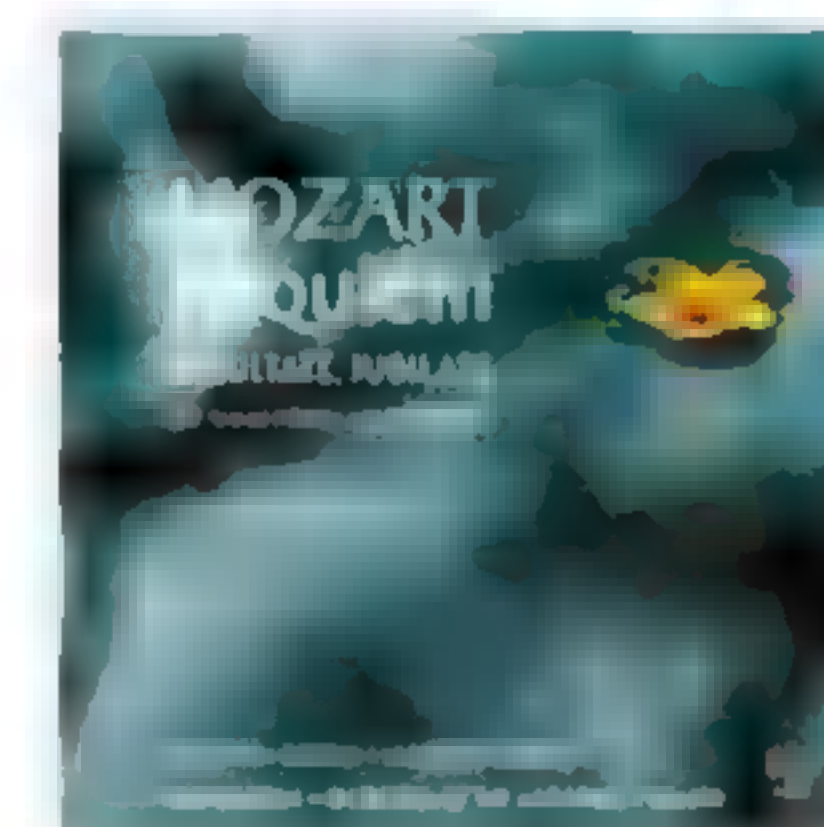
**Simone Kermes** *sop* **Stéphanie Houtzeel** *contr*

**Markus Brutscher** *ten* **Arnaud Richard** *bass*

**New Siberian Singers; MusicAeterna /  
Teodor Currentzis**

Alpha © ALPHA178 (47' • DDD • T/t)

**Two dramatic Requiems but one  
that finds more probing truths**



Preferences for Mozart's ever-beguiling Requiem are now as often based on the edition used as on the performers or performance style. These two new

recordings combine period instruments and Germanic pronunciation (ie "Re-kvi-em", hard Cs and Gs) with the standard completion by Süssmayr, to which

(notwithstanding its perceived technical shortcomings) can be ascribed some measure of authenticity: Süssmayr was there at the foot of the dying Mozart's sickbed, after all.

The Australian performance by and large takes a traditional path, allowing the work to unfold naturally and without exaggeration. In the slightly wiry sound of the gut strings and the pure-toned soprano in the Introit, I was reminded to a certain extent of Hogwood's recording with Emma Kirkby (using the Maunder edition: L'Oiseau-Lyre, 11/84<sup>R</sup>). The other soloists are fine – special mention must go to the stentorian Teddy Tahu Rhodes as he calls forth the last trumpet in the "Tuba mirum" – and they blend well. The "Rex tremendae" adopts a tempo appropriate to the King of awful majesty without going to Bernstein's extreme (Beyer edition: DG, 10/89). Only the fugues seem somewhat dutiful and under-characterised; a continuo organ is prominent throughout. Teodor Currentzis



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and his Novosibirsk forces take a different tack. Blazing trumpets, explosive timpani (in the *Sanctus*, for example) and sudden *fortes* extract the maximum drama from the music and the click of bows on strings might even be overdone in fast music. While the “Rex tremendae” is taken at the jig tempo so often preferred these days, the “Confutatis” and “Hostias” are played *Andante* as marked, and are none the worse for it, and the *Agnus Dei* is slower than usual so that its quavers are equal to those of the reprise of the Introit music. The plaintive *sotto voce* of the upper voices and the urgent but exhausted chromatic gropings of the closing section of the “Confutatis” are most moving.

What some might not find so persuasive is the stripping-down of the opening eight bars of the “Lacrimosa” to voices and bass (these were the last notes Mozart wrote); as Süssmayr’s completion of the movement draws to a close, bells cover the transition to the exposition of the “Amen” fugue, sketched in very rough form by Mozart. (Maunder, Druce, Levin et al offer putative completions of the fugue.) It’s ear-catching and strangely effective; in the context of a much-loved sacred work, others may not be so convinced.

Both recordings realise the Requiem as a work of inward and outward drama, composed in a tumultuous time by the supreme musical dramatist of his age. For those who require a period-instrument performance that allows its drama to unfold from within the music, Walker will not disappoint. Currentzis, on the other hand, draws back the curtain on the theatre of death and mourning, of fear and consolation, in a way that is not easily forgotten.

David Threasher

## Poulenc

‘The Complete Songs, Vol 1’

A sa guitare<sup>b</sup>. Bleuets<sup>d</sup>. Chansons gaillardes<sup>c</sup>. Cocardes<sup>d</sup>. La courte paille<sup>a</sup>. Dernier poème<sup>c</sup>. Fiançailles pour rire<sup>c</sup>. Métamorphoses<sup>c</sup>. Parisiana<sup>d</sup>. Trois Poèmes de Louise de Vilmorin<sup>b</sup>. Rosemonde<sup>c</sup>. Epitaphe sur un texte de Malherbe<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Felicity Lott, <sup>b</sup>Lorna Anderson, <sup>c</sup>Lisa Milne *sops* <sup>d</sup>Robert Murray *ten* <sup>e</sup>Christopher Maltman *bar* <sup>f</sup>Jonathan Lemalu *bass-bar* Malcolm Martineau *pf*  
Signum © SIGCD247 (69’ • DDD • T/t)

**An ambitious project to record Poulenc’s songs gets of to an accomplished start**



The distinguished accompanist Malcolm Martineau, with a team of British singers, here sets out on the massive task of recording all the melodies of Francis Poulenc. All three of the female contributors

are first-rate, fresh and bright, attacking cleanly and exploiting a wide tonal and dynamic range.

Broadly speaking, Poulenc’s songs divide themselves into two categories, those which reflect the cabaret tradition with chattering, often syncopated rhythms and those which subtly skirt sentimentality in haunting, distinctive lyricism. In *Métamorphoses*, for example, Lisa Milne brings out a delicate sense of fantasy; similarly, in the settings of poems by Louise de Vilmorin, Lorna Anderson uses a beautiful tonal range and, in “A sa guitare”, she shades her tone delicately, fresh and bright in echoing the sound of the instrument.

The climax of the disc comes in the seven songs of the sequence entitled *La courte paille* (“The Short Straw”), to words by the Belgian poet Maurice Carême. Felicity Lott here exploits her long experience in French operetta in the cabaret-style songs, characterising strongly, while singing with flawless purity up to her highest *pianissimo* notes in the tenderly lyrical songs. It is good to find this long-favourite singer in such winning voice.

The three male singers in the collection are all good too in the cabaret-style songs, characterising strongly with fine attack. Even so, there are reservations over the lyrical songs, where Christopher Maltman, for example, finds it hard to remain steady in long sustained notes, even though his feeling for words is always most sensitive, and he responds in perfect style to the sequence of 17th-century ribald songs, *Chansons gaillardes*. Then, in the lovely “Rosemonde”, to words by Guillaume Apollinaire, his half-tones are a delight.

Robert Murray, with his rather lighter baritone, is very affecting in another of the most moving of all Poulenc songs, “Bleuet”, again to words by Apollinaire, describing what horrors a young soldier will have seen in the trenches of the First World War (“You who have seen such terrible things / What do you think of the men of your childhood?”). It is a song which draws on the composer’s homosexual sympathies, just as he shows a natural feeling for the words of the woman poet Louise de Vilmorin, whom he met for the first time in 1934, coaxing a number of poems from her shortly thereafter with a view to setting them to music.

Less successful is the solitary song given to Jonathan Lemalu, where the sustained line of “Epitaphe sur un texte de Malherbe” is not quite steady enough. But generally this generously filled disc makes an impressive start for a project masterminded by Malcolm Martineau. Whether or not deliberately, the recording balance tends to favour his piano against the voices.

Edward Greenfield

## Rutter

Gloria. Magnificat<sup>a</sup>. Te Deum

<sup>a</sup>Elizabeth Cragg *sop* Tom Winpenny *org*  
Choirs of St Albans Cathedral; Ensemble DeChorum / Andrew Lucas  
Naxos © 8 572653 (65’ • DDD • T/t)

**John Rutter’s effective choral classics in scrupulous, sparkling performances**



Although best known for his many carols and anthems, John Rutter is equally adept at handling music on a larger canvas. His reflective Requiem

(now 25 years old) is an established classic. Much the same can be said of the evergreen 1974 setting of the *Gloria*, Rutter’s first major overseas commission. Its incisive, punchy, syncopated brass opening lingers memorably, setting the scene for some spectacular, polished and vibrant singing. The notoriously taxing finale is accomplished without a wobble, resulting in a deeply satisfying performance.

By way of lighter contrast, the *Magnificat* (1990) is imbued with a Latin-flavoured atmosphere of fiesta and celebration, the streetwise “Fecit potentiam” movement receiving a really mean and moody attack. What a delight it is to hear the chamber version and to marvel at Rutter’s scoring finesse, in particular his wind-writing, which is a model of effectiveness. Soprano soloist Elizabeth Cragg is especially melting in the delicious “Esurientes” movement.

The disc concludes with the 1988 setting of the *Te Deum* (not to be confused with the more recent *Winchester Te Deum*). While initially less arresting than the disc’s other works, the big tune towards the end is worthy of Walton, whose ceremonial spirit hovers over this beautiful music.

Andrew Lucas’s St Albans choristers (particularly the girls and boys, united on the top line) are on sparkling form, with first-class support from organist Tom Winpenny and the Ensemble DeChorum who scrupulously adhere to every one of the score’s markings. More recordings from St Albans, please – and could someone ask Rutter to score a major film?

Malcolm Riley

## A Scarlatti

Serenata a Filli (Tacete, aure, tacete).

Le Muse Urania e Clio lodano le bellezze di Filli (O mie figlie canore)

Emanuela Galli, Yetzabel Arias Fernández *sops*  
Martín Oro *counterten*

La Risonanza / Fabio Bonizzoni *hpd*  
Glossa © GCD921511 (64’ • DDD • T/t)

**Affectionate performances of a pair of Roman serenatas**





Having concluded their series of cantatas by Handel, La Risonanza and Fabio Bonizzoni now explore the Italian Baroque serenata – a genre that might be defined as a kind of little opera, generally without scene changes or dramatic action, designed as a nocturnal entertainment to celebrate a special occasion. These two Scarlatti serenatas composed for Rome during spring and summer 1706 each concern the beguiling Arcadian beauty “Filli” – apparently the pseudonym for Maria Isabella Ruspoli, the wife of the principal Italian patron of Handel (who first arrived in Italy only a few months after these serenatas were created).

The melancholic *Serenata a Filli* presents the rival lovers Fileno, Niso and Doralbo each lamenting that they adore Filli unrequitedly. La Risonanza’s string-playing in the minor-key sinfonia is eloquently evocative of night; Fileno’s careworn complaint that his heart is “Weighed down with dark clouds” is sung tenderly by Emanuela Galli, and Yetzabel Arias Fernández rapturously conveys that Niso’s “hope is only a shadow” in the beautifully spun “Ombre voi d’un cor fedele” (which counterparts whispered ostinato unison strings with a gently spinning voice part).

All three singers communicate the poetry intimately and sing with lyrical sweetness; the madrigalian concluding trio “Svegliatevi o bella” is gorgeous. *Le Muse Urania e Clio lodano le bellezze di Filli* is a charming serenade in which Apollo and two of his daughters exalt the beauty of Filli and bid her a good night’s sleep. Time and again, La Risonanza’s softly affectionate performances are subtly nuanced and beautifully stylish.

David Vickers

## Schütz

Geistliche Chormusik, SWV369-97 Op 11  
Dresden Chamber Choir; Cappella Sagittariana  
Dresden / Hans-Christoph Rademann  
Carus © CARUS83232 (102' • DDD • T/t)

## Schütz

Italian Madrigals, SWV1-19  
Dresden Chamber Choir /  
Hans-Christoph Rademann  
Carus © CARUS83237 (57' • DDD • T/t)

**Two oddly contrasted offerings from the same Dresden ensemble**



It can never be emphasised just how near to the miraculous was Schütz’s acuity in setting his native tongue to music. Few of his publications illustrate this



more comprehensively than the *Geistliche Chormusik* of 1648, which contains many treasures, notably the profoundly affecting “Selig sind die Toten”.

Having established their Schützian credentials some years since with a fine reading of the composer’s *Schwanengesang*, the Dresdner Kammerchor under Hans-Christoph Rademann recorded this set five years ago and the result is – at the very least – just as impressive. It makes an interesting alternative to Weser-Renaissance Bremen’s account (CPO), which is about 10 years older. Both combine voices and instruments but Weser-Renaissance consistently opt for solo singers, whereas Rademann alternates choir and soloists. However, the Dresdners sing with commendable clarity and unanimity of tone, so that although Weser-Renaissance’s account sounds more like chamber music between contrasted musical personalities, the newer set also has a commendable (but different) sense of purpose, and never feels overly directed.

As was common at the time, Schütz’s first publication was not in German but in Italian; his first and only book of madrigals. In this new recording made only last year, the Dresdner Kammerchor appears consistently as a choir, singing unaccompanied with several voices to each part. In doing so they buck the overwhelming trend in recent madrigal discography towards single voices and optional continuo (as Cantus Cölln do on their recording of this set, just reissued at mid-price on Harmonia Mundi’s “Gold” imprint – 1/00<sup>R</sup>). The unexpected result is that the older recording seems more dated than the new.

The distinction between choir and chamber ensemble I mentioned earlier holds here again, albeit this time to the Dresdners’ relative disadvantage. They sound far more conducted than on the 1648 set, which militates against the madrigals’ flexible and intimate exchange of ideas and quick changes of mood, all of which Cantus Cölln’s singers (accompanied on the lute by director Konrad Junghänel) manage with seemingly effortless ease. The Dresdners also seem less cohesive and confident as a body – not all the singers on the 1648 set appear on the second – which shows not just in the details but in a decidedly more tentative approach.

Fabrice Fitch

## R Strauss

Mädchenblümchen, Op 22. Fünf Lieder, Op 48. Drei Lieder, Op 69. Drei Lieder der Ophelia, Op 67. Amor, Op 68 No 5. Das Bächlein, Op 88 No 1. Die erwachte Rose, AV60. Leises Lied, Op 39 No 1. Malven. Muttertänderlei, Op 43 No 2. Rote Rosen, AV76. Schlagende Herzen, Op 29 No 2.

Ständchen, Op 17 No 2. Wiegenliedchen, Op 49 No 3

Gillian Keith *sop* Simon Lepper *pf*  
Champs Hill © CHRCDO18 (60' • DDD • T/t)

**A survey covering the range of Strauss’s songs, with a couple of odd omissions**



Just as Strauss showed his mastery of the orchestra in his early *Don Juan* (1889), so with Lieder he gave us the magical “Ständchen”, written two years earlier.

Gillian Keith, although she omits the Op 10 Songs and the *Four Last Songs*, covers the composer’s continuing attraction to solo vocal repertoire throughout his career. The majority of his songs, with their ready melodic flow, were written for his much-loved and similarly devoted wife, who often performed them with her husband.

Gillian Keith provides an impressive survey, although there are a few surprising omissions, notably “Morgen”, which was written as a wedding present for Strauss’s wife. The three songs without opus numbers consist of two of the earliest Lieder plus the composer’s very last song, “Malven”, written in 1948, and Gillian Keith reveals their melodic memorability. She is also at her finest in “Freundliches Vision” (from Op 48) and is quite charming in “Schlagende Herzen”. “Das Bächlein” was unfortunately dedicated to Goebbels and, even more doubtfully, includes in its last line the words “mein Führer”. It is immediately followed by the very florid “Amor”, a song that requires great vocal virtuosity which here is just a little uncomfortable.

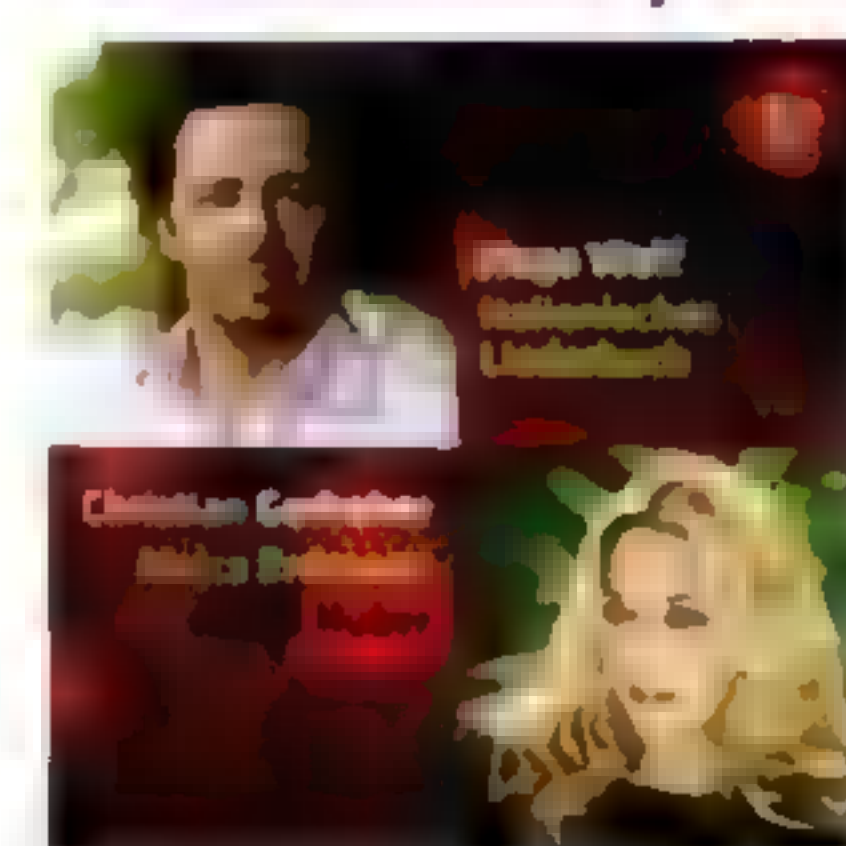
Keith is best suited to the three “Ophelia” songs with their intended hints of dementia. At times elsewhere, while the soprano upper range is flowingly controlled, it is often affected by peaking and a close vibrato, and, although Simon Lepper accompanies splendidly, I have to say this is not a collection which I find entirely satisfying. It is, however, well documented with full texts and translations.

Ivan March

## Wolf

Italienisches Liederbuch  
Mojca Erdmann *sop* Christian Gerhaher *bar*  
Gerold Huber *pf*  
RCA © 88697 72720-2 (81' • DDD)

**An Italian Songbook that is notable for the artistry of Christian Gerhaher**



Never one to understate a case, Wolf dubbed his *Italian Songbook* “the most original and artistically perfect of all my works”. While they may not probe the depths of



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passion and self-lacerating anguish of the Mörike and Spanish songbooks, these vignettes are unrivalled in their luminous grace – intermittently spiced by Wolfian malice – and their power of suggestion within a tiny span.

The men of the *Italian Songbook* are incorrigible romantics, voicing their longing and devotion in Wolf's most ecstatic vein of lyricism. Christian Gerhaher, his warmly burnished high baritone in its prime, is well-nigh ideal. Everything he does sounds immediate, sincerely felt. He floats a beautiful, rapt line in love songs such as "Der Mond hat eine schwere Klag' erhoben" and "Und willst du deinen Liebsten sterben sehen". With the excellent Gerold Huber, he is ever-sensitive to harmonic flux, notably in the shifting perspectives of "Und steht' ihr früh". At the other end of the spectrum, he relishes Wolf's portrayal of the lecherous bogus monks in "Geselle, soll'n wir uns in Kutten hüllen", a scene straight out of Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

With her sweet, pellucid tone and grace of phrase, Mojca Erdmann excels in songs of musing delicacy such as the crystalline "O wär' dein Haus durchsichtig". But she underplays the bitchery of numbers like "Wer rief dich, denn?" and "Wie lange schon". In the latter she contemplates her incompetent (and, we can guess, impotent) violinist boyfriend with long-suffering melancholy. Schwarzkopf, with Fischer-Dieskau and Moore (EMI, 12/90), Barbara Bonney, with Håkan Hagegård (Teldec, 7/94), and Felicity Lott, with Peter Schreier (Hyperion, 9/94), all suggest a languid boredom, to which Schwarzkopf adds her own brand of contemptuous hauteur.

The final "Ich hab' in Penna", too – the female riposte to Don Giovanni's *mille e tre* – could do with more gleeful bravado. That said, Erdmann's singing is unfailingly musical. Some may even prefer her relative restraint. While not ousting the versions cited above, this new *Italian Songbook* deserves a place alongside them, above all for Gerhaher's consummate, unostentatious artistry.

Richard Wigmore

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### 'Le divin Arcadelt'

**Anonymous** Nunc dimittis. Suscepimus, Deus. Responsum accepit Simeon **Arcadelt** Pater noster. Hodie beata virgo Maria. Missa Ave, Regina caelorum **De Silva** Inviolata, integra et casta es Maria. Ave, Regina caelorum **Palestrina** Senex puerum portabat. Diffusa est gratia **Musica Contexta; English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble / Simon Ravens**

Chandos © CHAN0779 (68' • DDD • T/t)

**The great madrigalist dons his sacred vestments to good effect**



Today, Arcadelt's claim to fame rests in his madrigals: his first book in the genre was reprinted dozens of times over many decades and the famous *Il bianco e dolce cigno* has earned him his place in music history. But if it needs demonstrating that he was more than a one-trick pony, this recording will do nicely. Following their Palestrinian experiences, Musica Contexta offer a Mass based on a motet by Andreas de Silva, a colleague who preceded Arcadelt at the Sistine Chapel. Though in no way groundbreaking, Arcadelt's Mass is beautifully judged, constantly complimenting its model's composer by drawing out his most felicitous ideas. The programme is completed with another motet by de Silva, and a couple more each from Arcadelt himself and his illustrious successor, Palestrina.

Musica Contexta make a virtue of presenting a variety of performance contexts, all of which are known to have held sway in 16th-century Rome, from full choir with or without instrumental accompaniment to solo voice and ensemble (to which the English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble contributes very effectively, though the soloist might have varied his tone colour and projected it, dare one say it, with more abandon). *Pace* the booklet-notes, there seems to me little need to justify this, and the variety it brings to the recording is self-recommending.

The plainchant items are cleanly done, though I suspect that Roman Renaissance singers would have dealt with them more inventively. In general the performances are committed and efficient, if erring (if that's the right word) just a touch on the side of the staid and cautious. None the less, this recording does more than just plug a gap in the discography; and that it does pleasingly.

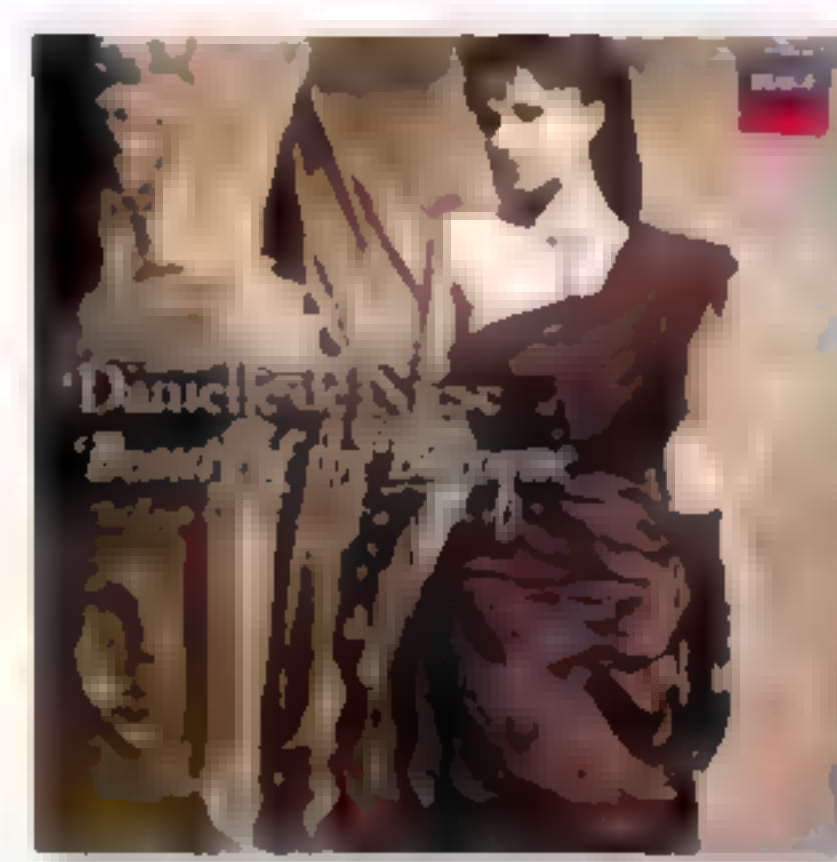
Fabrice Fitch

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### 'Beauty of the Baroque'

**JS Bach** Cantata No 202, 'Wedding Cantata' – Sich üben im Lieben. Cantata No 208, 'Hunt Cantata' – Schafe können sicher weiden **Dowland** Come again: sweet love doth now invite. What if I never speed? **Handel** Acis and Galatea – Heart, the seat of soft delight (arr Mozart). Rodelinda – Io t'abbraccio<sup>a</sup>. Samson, HWV57 – Let the bright Seraphim. Serse – Ombra mai fù. The Triumph of Time and Truth, HWV71 – Guardian angels, oh, protect me **Monteverdi** L'incoronazione di Poppea – Pur ti miro<sup>a</sup>. Scherzi musicali – Quel sguardo sdegnosetto **Pergolesi** Stabat mater – Stabat mater dolorosa<sup>a</sup> **Purcell** Dido and Aeneas – Thy hand, Belinda... When I am laid in earth **Danielle de Niese** *sop*<sup>a</sup> **Andreas Scholl** *counterten* The English Concert / Harry Bicket Decca © 478 2260DH (57' • DDD • T/t)

### Glyndebourne's soprano sensation offers a mixed Baroque selection



Hailed for the unlikely feat of putting the "sex into Sussex" after her charismatic Cleopatra for the Glyndebourne Festival, Danielle de

Niese is a born stage animal, effortlessly wooing theatre audiences with her exotic beauty and slinky grace of movement.

Her singing, qua singing, has provoked reactions ranging from gushing adulation to downright bitchery. Both extremes seem wide of the mark. Setting out to captivate a blind audience with a popular Baroque medley, she reveals a pleasing lightish soprano, with a hint of sultriness in the middle register and distinctive quick vibrato that can grow edgy under pressure. De Niese can certainly "sell" a song, vividly catching the erotic languor of the two Dowland songs and the playfully caressing lilt of Bach's "Sich üben im Lieben", abetted by the ever-spirited English Concert. She and guest countertenor Andreas Scholl combine touchingly in the agonised husband-wife farewell duet from *Rodelinda* and lean rapturously into the bittersweet suspensions of the *Poppea* duet (which, *pace* the booklet-note, is known not to be by Monteverdi).

Lulled by the dulcet recorders of the English Concert, de Niese is charming, too, in Galatea's "Heart, thou seat of soft delight", though here and in the prayer sung by the penitent Beauty in *The Triumph of Time and Truth* I found myself craving a purer *legato* and more dynamic variety, including a true *pianissimo*. In the clarion coloratura of "Let the bright Seraphim" she is agile enough but tends to sound hectic rather than jubilant – and her words, so clear in the Dowland, can be disconcertingly vague.

Handel's "Ombra mai fù", unsurprisingly, sounds low for her (why choose a castrato aria with hundreds of Handelian soprano arias on offer?); and though she sings Dido's lament with evident feeling, her tone lacks the depth and evenness to convey the queen's full tragic nobility. A disc of mixed pleasures, then. Yet for all de Niese's vocal imperfections, the unconverted should find plenty to enjoy, especially when the soprano is in blithe or seductive mode.

Richard Wigmore

---

### 'The Ballad Singer'

**Beethoven** Aus Goethes Faust, Op 75 No 3 **Brahms** Es war ein Markgraf über'm Rhein, WoO33 No 29 **Emanuel** The Desert **Loewe** Edward, Op 1 No 1. Die wandelnde Glocke, Op 20 No 3 **Mahler** Lieder aus 'Des Knaben Wunderhorn' – Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen **Porter** Fifty Million



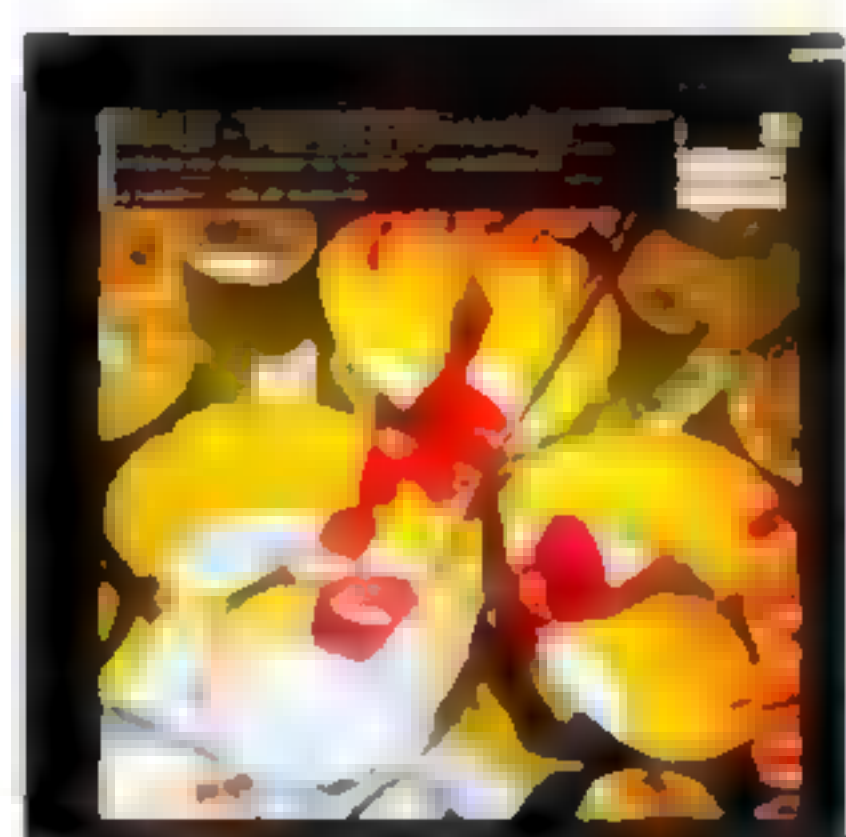


## Vivaldi

'Vespers for St Mark'

Domine ad adjuvandum, RV593. Dixit Dominus, RV807. Confitebor tibi Domine, RV596. Beatus vir, RV795. Laudate pueri, RV600. Lauda Jerusalem, RV609. Magnificat, RV610. Laetatus sum, RV607

**María Soledad de la Rosa, Mariana Flores, Caroline Weynants** *sops* **Joëlle Charlier, Evelyn Ramirez, Fabián Schofrin** *countertens* **Valerio Contaldo, Fernando Guimarães** *tens* **Alejandro Meerapfel** *bass* **Namur Chamber Choir; Les Agréments / Leonardo García Alarcón**  
Ambronay © 2011 AMY029 (118' • DDD • T/t)



Numerous recordings of Vivaldi's church music invent a hypothetical Vespers context. The newest such flight of liturgical fancy conducted by

Leonardo García Alarcón uses some of the same music as his recent predecessors but

chooses to dress a concert performance in the garb of a feast for Venice's patron saint.

The documentation just about steers clear of claiming that this so-called "Vespro a San Marco" has any imaginary relationship with Venice's famous Basilica, with which Vivaldi's compositional career had no known connection (although his earliest documented public performance was as an additional violinist for Christmas services at St Mark's in 1696). Alarcón's booklet-note argues that his exploration of Vivaldi's sacred music redresses an imbalance because nowadays the composer's music "seems to live only in the opera house" – a strange perspective. It's a pity that the track-listing fails to properly title or acknowledge the first Vivaldi piece we hear (*Domine ad adjuvandum*, RV593).

The striking *Dixit Dominus* rediscovered in Dresden only a few years ago receives its fourth recording already: Les Agréments plays with vitality, the 20-strong Namur Chamber Choir is efficient and the soloists are capable. Valerio Contaldo sings with virility, Evelyn

Ramirez produces a dark-hued matronly vibrato, and the male trio of Fabián Schofrin, Fernando Guimarães and Alejandro Meerapfel perform *Confiteor tibi Domine* spiritedly, even if Schofrin's hooty countertenor will not please everyone.

During *Beatus vir*, María Soledad de la Rosa's florid passages are somewhat pinched, whereas Mariana Flores's voice is light and supple; Alarcón's mystifying decision to carve up the solo setting of *Laudate pueri* (RV600) bizarrely between the two sopranos prohibits coherence. His energetic handling doesn't always succeed entirely, and the "evocation" of a Vespers service is hindered by clamorous applause between the last pieces, but the occasion comes to the boil magnificently in a solemn G minor *Magnificat* (RV610) that Vivaldians will relish for the Namur Chamber Choir's dramatic choral contribution during the plangent "Et misericordia".

**David Vickers**





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**The Independent**

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The English tenor Jeremy Ovenden charts a personal journey through arias from Mozart's Italian Operas. The programme is drawn from both well-known works like 'Idomeneo' (Vedrommi intorno) and 'Così fan tutte' (Un'aura amorosa) and from his lesser-known early operas, including 'Il sogno di Scipione' (Quercia annosa), 'La finta giardiniera' (Dentro il mio petto) and 'Lucio Silla' (Il desio di vendetta).

Ovenden has quickly established himself as one of the finest Mozart tenors of his generation, and is joined by the OAE and conductor Jonathan Cohen for this new recital disc. Recent performances have been lauded by both audiences and critics:

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Frenchmen – The Tale of the Oyster **Schubert**  
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Op 31 No 1. Der Schatzgräber, Op 45 No 1  
**Stanford** La belle dame sans merci **Sullivan**  
The Lost Chord **Traditional** Lord Randall  
(arr C Scott) **Wolf** Mörike Lieder –  
Der Feuerreiter

Gerald Finley bar Julius Drake pf  
Hyperion © CDA67830 (71' • DDD • T/t)

**Romantic ballads, ranging from camp  
and colourful to utterly spellbinding**



This collection of strophic ballads has its fair share of the Gothic and Grand Guignol, most of it concerned with death, near-death or yearning for death.

It opens with a rare glimpse of Beethovenian humour ("The Song of the Flea") in a performance from Gerald Finley and Julius Drake that sets the tone and standard for the whole disc.

Finley, who has one of those exquisite voices that could make poetry of the telephone directory, vividly characterises the words without recourse to the exaggerated enunciation to which some of his peers are off-puttingly prone (only once did I wince at an over-egged delivery – "ex-óst-ed", rather than "ex-áwst-ed", in Louis Emanuel's amusingly camp "The Desert"). Drake uses all the colouristic forces he can command with wit ("The Flea"), bravura ("Erlkönig") and Wolf's spellbinding ("Der Feuerreiter") and imagination (Loewe's "Die wandelnde Glocke"). As these pages have said before, it's a great partnership.

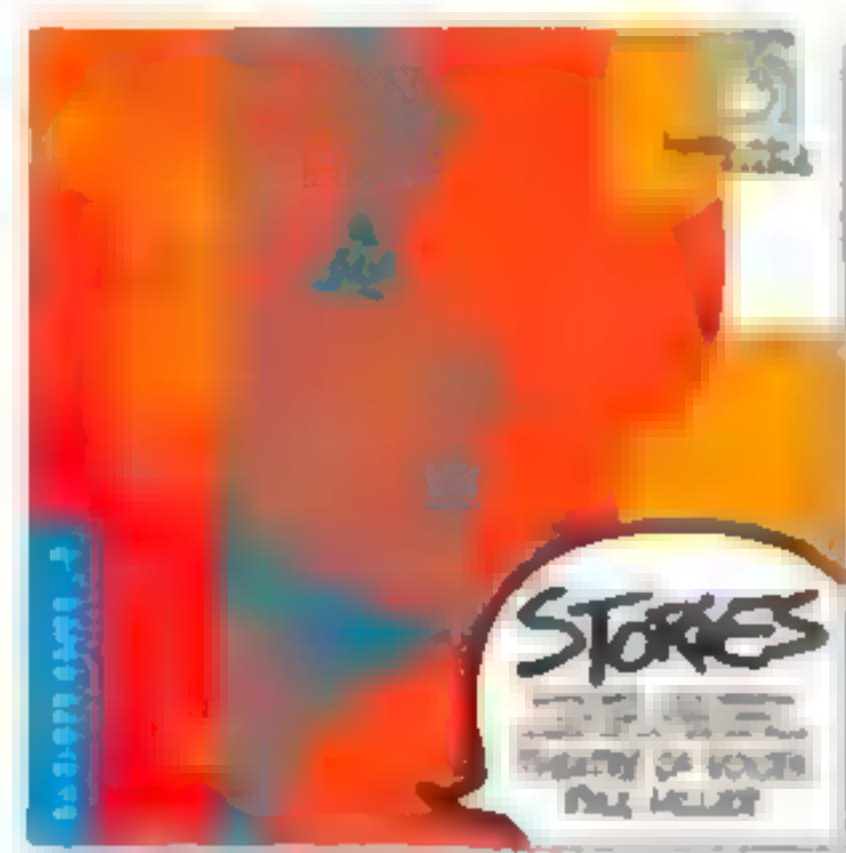
I do question the musical and literary value of some of the songs presented here. Perhaps audiences were once moved by "Edward" (Loewe/Herder) or entranced by the risible "Die Löwenbraut" ("The Lion's Bride") by one Adelbert von Chamisso, a grim tale straight out of *Struwwelpeter* set to music for some reason by Robert Schumann. Neither strikes me as distinguished in either area, though Finley and Drake make them engaging enough. The only two performances that don't come off are "The Lost Chord" (too slow for its triumphal peroration to truly register) and Cole Porter's "The Tale of the Oyster", which is made to sound like something by Brahms.

Jeremy Nicholas

## 'Stories'

Berberian Stripsody **Berio** A-Ronne  
**Cage** Story **Mac Low** Young Turtle  
Asymmetries **Marsh** Not a Soul but  
Ourselves **Frank** As I was Saying  
Theatre of Voices / **Paul Hillier**  
Harmonia Mundi © HMU80 7527 (67' • DDD)

**Prima le parole? Berio and friends  
play with the idea of text-setting**

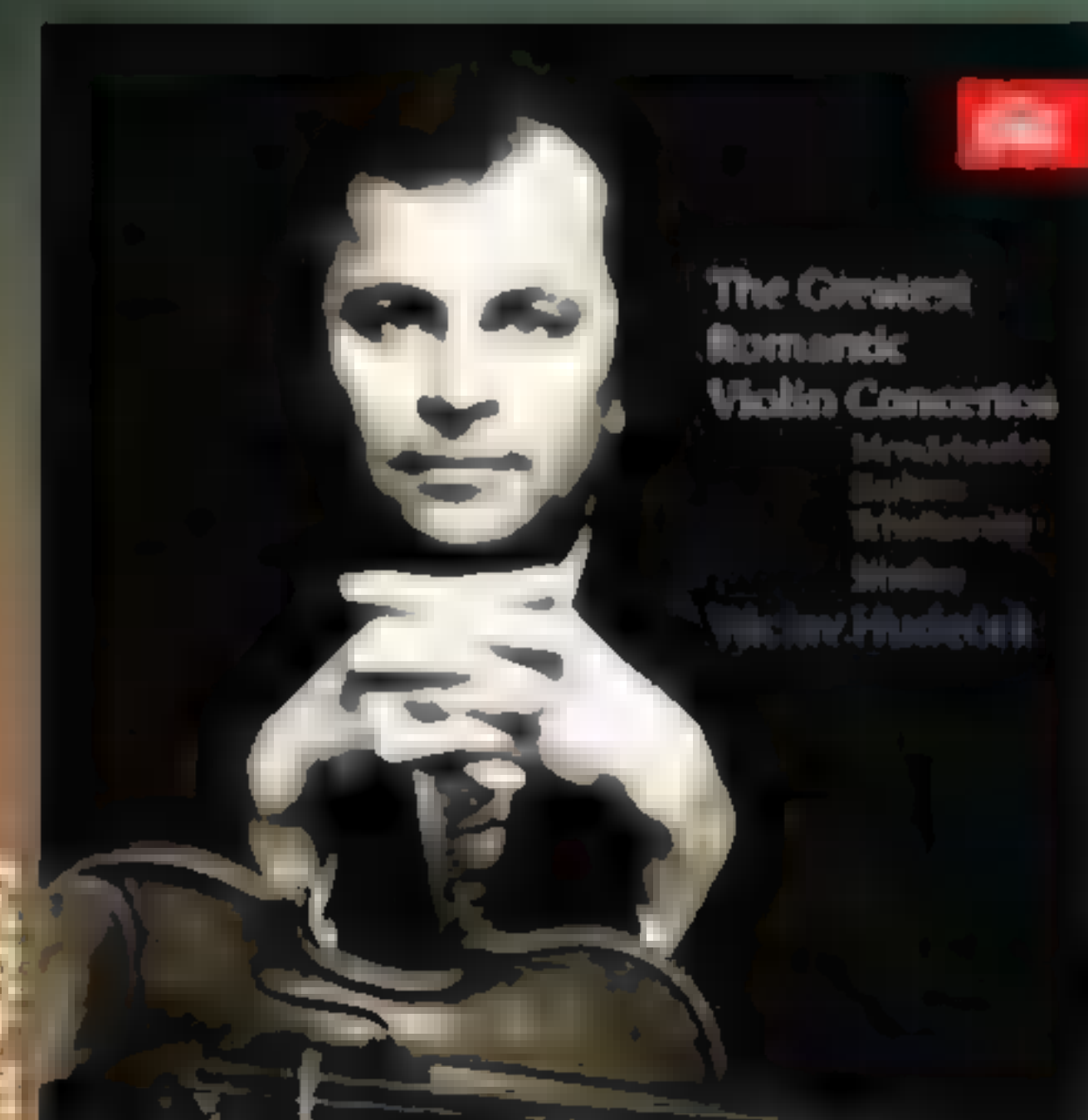


Thinking about it one day, I realised what an inappropriate word convention has bequeathed us to describe what composers do when they put music to text. In any other context, "set" implies rigidity and unbending permanence. But composers compose with a working assumption that music can liberate, elevate and enhance words – yes?

Not that any of the composers featured on Paul Hillier's latest Theatre of Voices release "set" anything, not in that conventional way. Berio commissioned Edoardo Sanguineti to write him a piece-specific, mobile-form text for *A-Ronne*, and Cage's Gertrude Stein-based *Story* illuminates the Ivor Cutler-esque inner-structural logic of her short poem – "Once upon a time the world was round / and you could go on it around and around" – more profoundly than a flat-pack musical structure could. The rhythmic stresses and harmonic alliterations – the sound of Stein's words – becomes the music; or perhaps Cage finds the music that's already within the words, which he benevolently arranges to go "around and around" in structural loops. All these pieces build on that concept: that text itself has inherent structural significance as sound.

Berio allied *A-ronne* to the Italian madrigal tradition, and Theatre of Voices run with that idea: as Sanguineti's assemblage of text turns into an essay about beginnings, middles and ends, Theatre of Voices' performance acts out the notion that Berio's piece has no narrative beginning, middle or finish – this open-ended structure moves forward in time, but endlessly ruminates about what sort of structure it might be, which gives it a structure. Jackson Mac Low and Sheldon Frank's performance poetry fits perfectly into this hinterland between music and text, Roger Marsh's domesticated modernism less convincingly.

Cathy Berberian's sexy, zany *Stripsody* is also a problem here. In Berberian's hands, this most famous of graphic scores ("strip" in the sense of a score arranged like a cartoon strip) is brash, spontaneous and funny. Abrupt editing and the narrative-liberated-from-reality potential of animated film technique creates an illusion of time moving faster than it actually can; Berberian's performance relishes the sonic equivalent of that information overload. When she quotes The Beatles' *Ticket To Ride*, it crumbles into nothing faster than a Wings record, an objective found object that's been ground inside the subjective texture of whimpers, shouts and splats. This new performance is too measured and schooled. The Beatles quote is flagged up with a beaming "look at this" smile, and I miss the crazed soliloquy of the lone voice. **Philip Clark**



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# Opera

La Stupenda in Handel • Elder unearths a bel canto rarity • Previn's Brief Encounter

## Britten

### The Turn of the Screw

**William Burden** *ten* ..... Prologue/Peter Quint  
**Camilla Tilling** *sop* ..... Governess  
**Emma Bell** *sop* ..... Miss Jessel  
**Joanna Songi** *sop* ..... Flora  
**Christopher Sladdin** *treb* ..... Miles  
**Anne-Marie Owens** *sop* ..... Mrs Grose  
**London Philharmonic Orchestra** /  
**Edward Gardner**  
 Glyndebourne Festival Opera (M) (2) GFOCD011-07  
 (104' • DDD • S/T)

Recorded live, August 2007

Selected comparison:

Britten (5/90) (LOND) 425 672-2LH2

### A revealing sonic picture of the first Turn of the Screw at Glyndebourne



Glyndebourne's first *The Turn of the Screw* divided opinion. At some points the staging delved deeper into the opera's subconscious than we have gone before – the scene where Peter Quint tended to Miles in the bath could have been lifted out of Humphrey Carpenter's controversial biography of the composer – but the absence of any sense of claustrophobia told against it. Surprisingly, perhaps, that same trade-off is also present in this purely audio recording, made at the 2007 festival.

Outstanding is Edward Gardner and his team of soloists from the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Everything is brilliantly executed – the pacing taut, the feeling for Britten's sound world instinctive and the instrumental playing well-nigh unsurpassed. Like the production, Gardner peers fearlessly below the score's surface: listen to the malevolent kaleidoscope of sounds as Quint lures Miles into the garden at night (the bathroom scene at Glyndebourne) and the glacial strings when Mrs Grose recounts Quint's death on the icy road.

The production's downside was that its restless use of the stage revolve often placed singers at a distance. Even more than in Glyndebourne's recording of *Peter Grimes* (1/11), this results in a less than ideal balance and many words are lost. Camilla Tilling gets right under the skin of the Governess, laying bare the nerve-endings of her insecurity. But how much more immediate Britten's Jennifer

Vyvyan is, caught so close to the microphone in her encounter with Miss Jessel that we can almost feel her goosebumps. Anne-Marie Owens is a strong, maternal Mrs Grose; Christopher Sladdin's Miles and Joanna Songi's Flora, both excellent. As Quint and Miss Jessel, William Burden and Emma Bell put flesh on the ghostly couple, with Burden hitting a conversational tone in the Prologue. Not a replacement for Britten's own recording but an often chilling, intense, live alternative. **Richard Fairman**

## Handel

### Samson

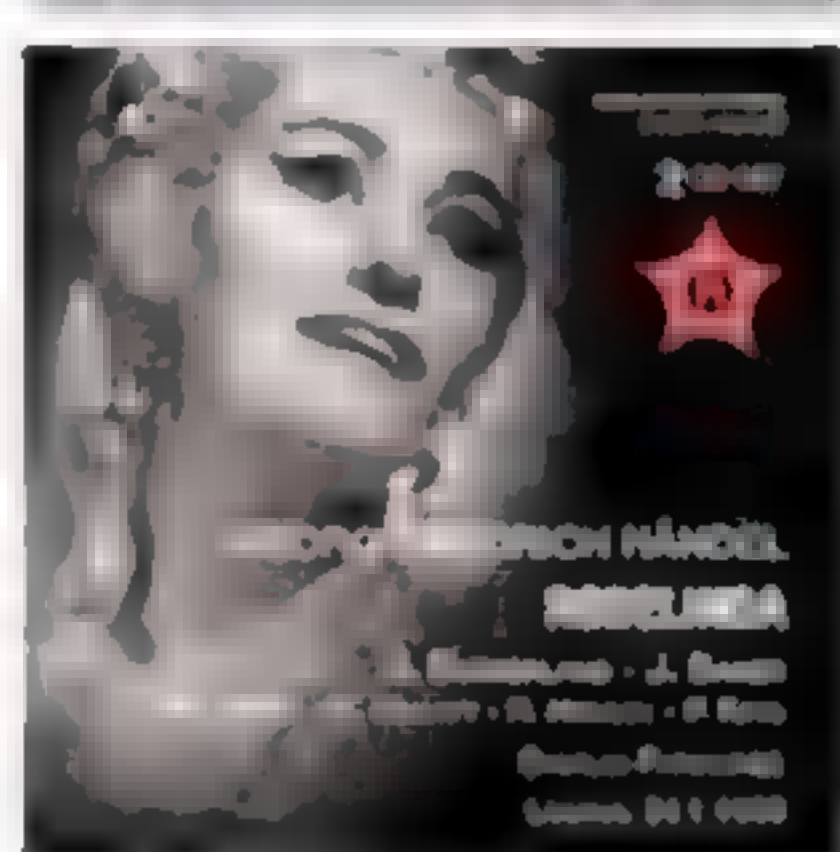
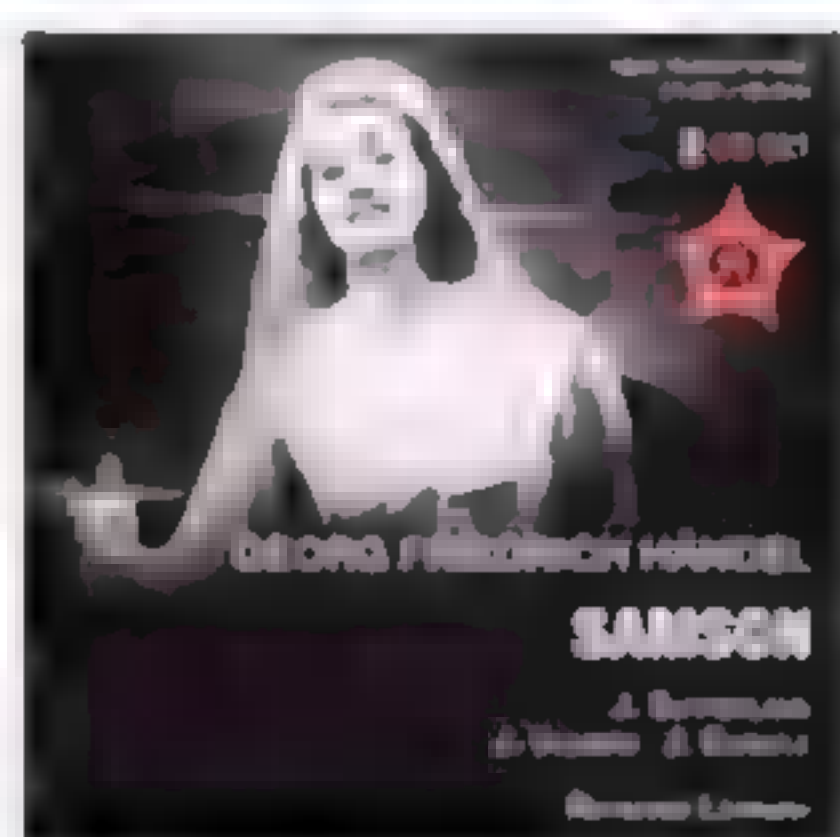
**Jon Vickers** *ten* ..... Samson  
**Joan Carlyle** *sop* ..... Dalila  
**Joan Sutherland** *sop* ..... Israelite Woman  
**James Pease** *bass* ..... Harapha  
**Lauris Elms** *contr* ..... Micah  
**Joseph Rouleau** *bass* ..... Manoah  
**Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House** / **Raymond Leppard**  
 Andromeda (S) (2) ANDRCD9070 (129' • ADD)  
 Recorded live, January 3, 1959

## Handel

### Rodelinda (sung in English)

**Joan Sutherland** *sop* ..... Rodelinda  
**Margreta Elkins** *mez* ..... Bertarido  
**Alfred Hallett** *ten* ..... Grimoaldo  
**Raymond Herincx** *bass* ..... Garibaldo  
**Patricia Kern** *mez* ..... Unulfo  
**Janet Baker** *contr* ..... Eduige  
**Chandos Choir; Philomusica Orchestra** /  
**Charles Farncombe**  
 Andromeda (S) (2) ANDRCD9075 (141' • ADD)  
 Recorded live at St Pancras Town Hall, London,  
 January 24, 1959

### Two major Handel roles for Dame Joan, shortly before her breakthrough in Lucia



Two recordings of Handel operas from early 1959, both starring the young Joan Sutherland and both captured just weeks before she had her spectacular triumph that February in the title-role in Zeffirelli's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. It is astonishing that so soon before her big occasion Sutherland should have

been learning and performing these major Handel roles, particularly as the performances in every way bear out the glorious freshness of her voice at this stage in her career.

In *Samson* she was cast as the Israelite Woman, a role that offers several important solos with the aria "Let the bright Seraphim" as a spectacular conclusion. Even at the time, Sutherland's performance had everyone agog to hear her in *Lucia* the following month. *Samson* offered not only a starring role for Sutherland but an equal opportunity for the great Canadian tenor Jon Vickers as the blinded Samson. It seems incredible that a singer of Heldentenor quality like Vickers could sing so stylishly in Handel, with elaborate divisions perfectly executed. Not only that, his portrayal of Samson is deeply moving, thanks to his vocal acting over a wide tonal and dynamic range. In Act 1 the aria "Total eclipse" is agonisingly intense, all the more affecting when one realises that Handel wrote it as his own eyesight was failing.

The other soloists make a strong team, not least bass-baritone James Pease as the giant Harapha, who taunts Samson in his blindness. Joan Carlyle is also splendid as Dalila, especially so in her wonderfully matched duet with Sutherland. The snag on this recording is not only the limited instrumental sound but the roughness of the string-playing, surprising when Raymond Leppard was conducting. Happily, the wind parts and all the voices are very well caught.

The performance of *Rodelinda* followed 21 days later, one of the early productions of the Handel Opera Society. The acoustic in St Pancras Town Hall is much drier but still allows voices to come over with much of their natural bloom. Here again Sutherland is magnificent, fresh and clear, attacking even the most exposed notes with ideal precision and clarity, and displaying her phenomenal upper range ravishingly.

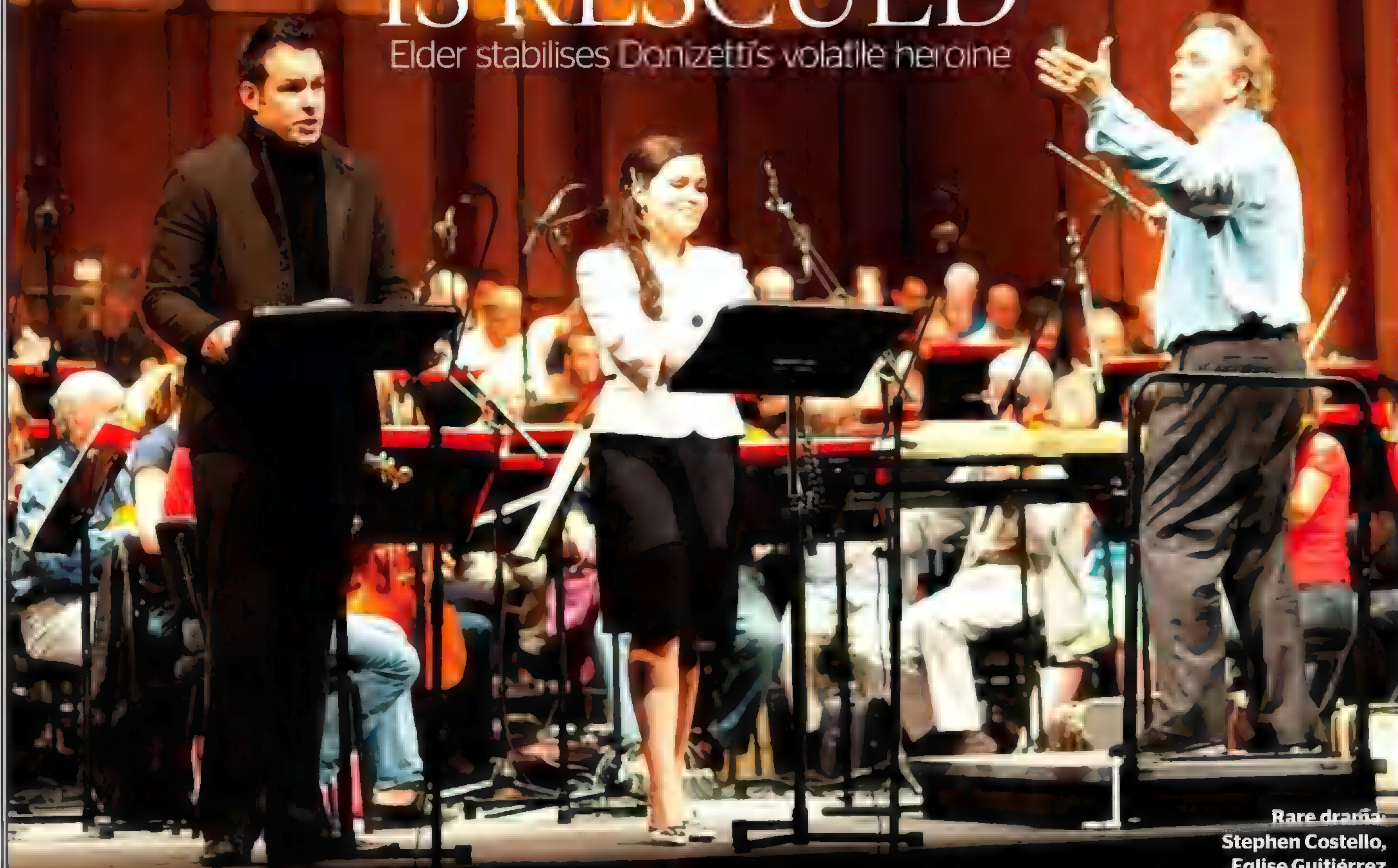
Charles Farncombe directs the Philomusica Orchestra with understanding and the rest of the cast consistently clear and steady. It is specially good to hear the young Janet Baker in the incidental role of Eduige, singing with heartfelt vehemence and sense of drama. Andromeda has remastered the original tapes so that, for all the limitations of the instrumental sound, one can enjoy the singing with little distraction. No notes are provided, only a list of tracks. Curiously, those for





# Linda IS RESCUED

Elder stabilises Donizetti's volatile heroine



Rare drama  
Stephen Costello,  
Eglise Gutiérrez  
and Sir Mark Elder

## Donizetti

### Linda di Chamounix

Eglise Gutiérrez *sop* ..... Linda  
Stephen Costello *ten* ..... Carlo  
Alessandro Corbelli *bar* Marquis de Boisfleury  
Ludovic Tézier *bar* ..... Antonio  
Marianna Pizzolato *mez* ..... Pierotto  
Bálint Szabó *bass* ..... Prefect  
Elizabeth Sikora *mez* ..... Maddalena  
Luciano Botelho *ten* ..... Intendant  
Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera  
House, Covent Garden / Sir Mark Elder  
Opera Rara ① ③ ORC43 (165' • DDD • S/T/t)  
Recorded live at the Royal Opera House, Covent  
Garden, September 7 & 14, 2009



Linda di Chamounix came towards the end of Donizetti's composing career. It was first performed in May 1842 at the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna, where Donizetti had been appointed musical director of the Italian

opera season. The cast included the tenor Napoleone Moriani: he is still of interest today as the father of at least one of the three illegitimate children of Giuseppina Strepponi, who was to become Verdi's mistress and second wife.

The opera is a *melodramma semiserio*; there's a *buffo* bass and a mad scene for the soprano, but the bass is not wholly comic and the soprano recovers without dying. The story is hard to take seriously. Linda, sent to Paris to escape the attentions of the lecherous Marchese, loses her wits on receiving a double blow: she is abandoned by her beloved Carlo and cursed by her father. She is brought back to Chamounix by her faithful friend, Pierotto, and only regains her sanity when Carlo repeats the words and music of the Act 1 love duet. The score, however, is a powerful one. Donizetti makes use of reminiscence motifs to good effect: from the love duet and, even more tellingly, from Pierotto's ballad about a girl who leaves home and ignores her mother's sound advice. And there's some splendid

patter for the Marchese, in the manner of Rossini's Doctor Bartolo.

Mark Elder's conducting is punchy and delicate by turns, the chorus and orchestra responding to his vigilant control of dynamics. The sound is good, except where members of the chorus are given little solos. The two leads are not quite top drawer. Eglise Gutiérrez's tone has an occluded quality in places and Stephen Costello is full-throated rather than graceful. The best performance comes from Alessandro Corbelli, in a part that could have been written for him. Ludovic Tézier spins a beautiful, proto-Verdian line as Linda's father and Bálint Szabó is his equal as the Prefect.

The recording includes an extended version of the mad scene. The booklet is exemplary. For greater clarity, though, it would help if Opera Rara put unset passages of the libretto in italics rather than between inverted commas. Taken as a whole, the performance does the composer proud.

Richard Lawrence



## Opera reviews

*Rodelinda* are in the original Italian, though the performance is given in English translation. **Edward Greenfield**

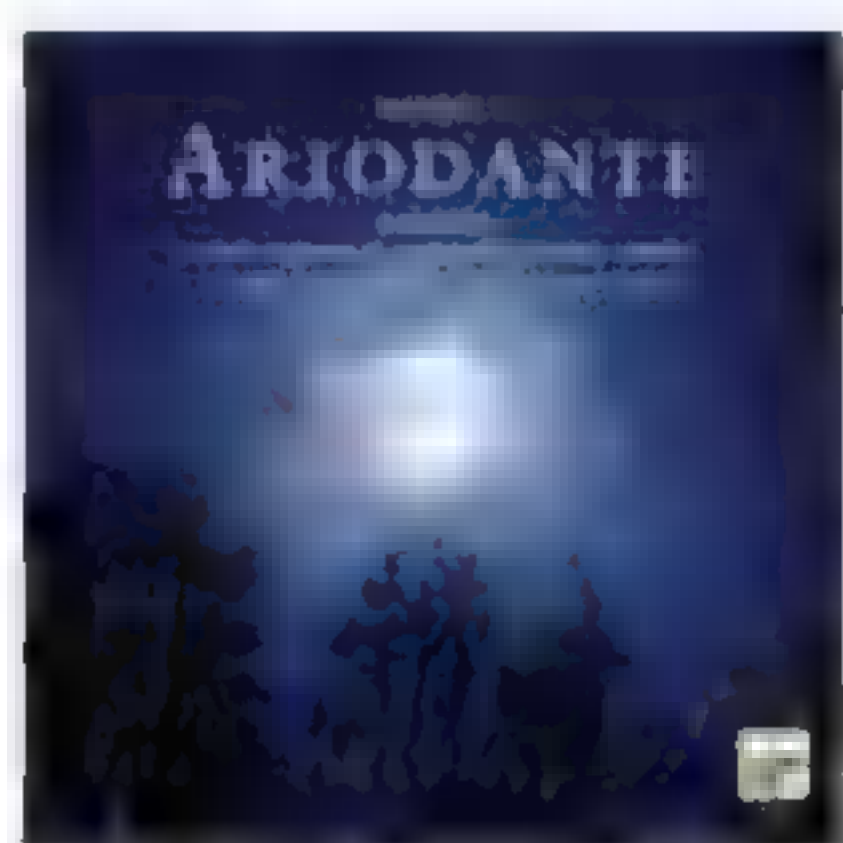
### Handel

#### Ariodante

Joyce DiDonato *mez*..... Ariodante  
Karina Gauvin *sop*..... Ginevra  
Sabina Puértolas *sop*..... Dalinda  
Marie-Nicole Lemieux *contr*..... Polinesso  
Topi Lehtipuu *ten*..... Lurcanio  
Matthew Brook *bass-bar*..... King of Scotland  
Anicio Zorzi Giustiniani *ten*..... Odoardo  
Il Complesso Barocco / Alan Curtis

Virgin Classics © ③ 070844-2 (3h 13' • DDD • S/T/t)

**Joyce DiDonato is wonderful in the title-role of one of Handel's finest operas**



In 1734 Handel moved his opera company from the King's Theatre in the Haymarket to John Rich's new Theatre Royal at Covent Garden. The advantages

of the latter house included the availability of a small chorus and the presence of the dancer Marie Sallé, whom Rich had initially brought over from Paris to his theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. *Ariodante* opened on January 8, 1735, followed by *Alcina* on April 16. Both operas were based on "Orlando furioso", the epic poem by Ariosto first published in 1516.

*Ariodante* is an excellent starting-point for anyone new to Handelian opera. The plot is strong and reasonably credible. The drama moves swiftly, too, Handel sometimes confounding one's expectations: Ginevra is so incensed by Polinesso's advances that her aria kicks off with no instrumental introduction, while the *da capo* reprise of the first duet for Ginevra and Ariodante is charmingly interrupted by the King.

Handel revived the opera in 1736, with many changes. This recording is of the version as first staged, with a couple of exceptions: the King's aria in Act 2 is replaced by a siciliano; the dances at the end of the same act are dropped in favour of the sequence later transferred to *Alcina*; and the Gavotte in Act 3, already heard in the Overture, gives way to a Rondeau. All these pieces were discarded before the premiere.

*Ariodante* is sung by the wonderful Joyce DiDonato. "Con l'ali di costanza" is taken at quite a lick: fair enough, as the reference is to Cupid's wings. In "Scherza infida", with its mournful bassoon, DiDonato has the full measure of Ariodante's despair. Only "Dopo notte" fails to impress fully, partly because the violins' attack on the first note is rather weedy and partly because the reprise is more rewritten than embellished.

There are no weaknesses in the rest of the cast. Alan Curtis directs with his customary stylishness and, in the "Ballo di ninfe...",

a nice touch of rustic phrasing. The harpsichord could be more prominent but otherwise the balance is good.

**Richard Lawrence**

### Martin

#### Der Sturm

Robert Holl *bass*..... Prospero  
Christine Buffle *sop*..... Miranda  
Ethan Herschenfeld *bass*..... Alonso  
Josef Wagner *bar*..... Sebastian  
James Gilchrist *ten*..... Antonio  
Simon O'Neill *ten*..... Ferdinand  
Andreas Macco *bass*..... Gonzalo  
Marcel Beekman *ten*..... Adrian  
Dennis Wilgenhof *bass*..... Caliban  
Roman Sadnik *ten*..... Trinkulo  
André Morsch *bar*..... Stephano  
Thomas Oliemans *bar*..... Boatswain  
Netherlands Radio Choir and Philharmonic Orchestra / Thierry Fischer

Hyperion © ③ CDA67821/3 (153' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, October 11, 2008

**Frank Martin's take on The Tempest in a near-definitive concert recording**



Most surprising about this recording of Frank Martin's *Der Sturm* is its being the first complete account of an opera which, while hardly a

mainstay of the immediate post-war repertoire, has a reputation and an intrinsic quality matched by relatively few such works from this period. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, for whom the main role was intended, recorded highlights in the early 1960s (DG, recently reissued by Brilliant Classics), but only with this concert performance from October 2008 has the opera finally become available in its entirety.

Martin embarked on his realisation in 1952, deriving the libretto from Schlegel's imaginative though faithful translation. The result was first heard at the Vienna State Opera on June 17, 1956, conducted by Ernest Ansermet. As a distillation of Martin's idiom, the opera combines the serial thinking he had used for more than a decade with the rhythmic clarity and unforced lyricism through which he offset any tendency to austerity. For all its absence of vocal histrionics and its resourceful handling of a sizeable orchestra, what comes through most forcibly is the rounded and humane characterisation of its main figures – their dilemmas and uncertainties played out as an archetypal "human comedy", where allusions to "early music" and jazz are absorbed effortlessly into a score whose 10 scenes range from a few minutes to almost half an hour, the evocative Overture and transcendent Epilogue framing the whole in fitting terms.

The cast is a fine one, not least Robert

Holl's authoritative Prospero – a philosopher anxious to right wrongs done to him and his daughter, so renouncing his island existence and magical powers – and Christine Buffle's wide-eyed Miranda. An arresting feature is the chorus's assumption of Ariel, its ethereally divided textures at one with the intangibility of this most elusive Shakespearean creation. Thierry Fischer secures a committed response from the Netherlands Radio forces, burnished strings and incisive woodwind heard to advantage in the fabled Concertgebouw acoustic, while the booklet includes an extensive essay by Alain Perroux. A near-definitive account of an opera whose take on *The Tempest* has yet to be equalled for sensitivity and insight.

**Richard Whitehouse**

### Mozart

#### Don Giovanni

Nicola Ulivieri *bar*..... Don Giovanni  
Anna Samuil *sop*..... Donna Anna  
Maria Luigia Borsi *sop*..... Donna Elvira  
Chen Reiss *sop*..... Zerlina  
Dmitry Korchak *ten*..... Don Ottavio  
Maurizio Muraro *bass-bar*..... Leporello  
Simon Orfila *bar*..... Masetto  
Marco Spotti *bass*..... Commendatore  
New Israeli Vocal Ensemble;  
Israel Philharmonic Orchestra / Zubin Mehta

Helicon © ③ HLCDO29627 (164' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Mann Auditorium, Tel Aviv,

January 27 & 31, February 5, 2009

**A strangely miscast Giovanni from Israel but there are good things to be heard**



The outward components of this set aren't promising: Conductor Zubin Mehta is best known for heavier repertoire, the Israel Philharmonic hasn't

often been a paragon of style and Tel Aviv's Mann Auditorium is hardly an optimum recording venue. All these factors, however, turned out to be the pluses (even the acoustics have an unexpected warmth) in what is otherwise a less-than-competitive *Don Giovanni*. Drawn from a series of concert performances, the recording has an overall conviction that makes a case for itself, not as anything close to a primary choice but as a way of touching base with what seems to have been an important event.

It's the cast that makes you wonder why the set was issued. Only Chen Reiss's fresh, focused Zerlina is suitable. The rest seem like non-Mozartian generalists, some having various degrees of wobble and the kind of vocal magnitude that dictates slower-than-typical tempi. These characteristics aren't such a problem with Maurizio Muraro's Leporello, given how winningly his bass projects the character's hearty peasant



temperament. His counterpart in the title-role, Nicola Ulivieri, has a rich, often lovely voice, but projects no particularly distinctive characterisation. In the Donna Anna/Don Ottavio axis, Anna Samuil pushes her voice in such ways that one hears the effort as much as the effect and, though Dmitry Korchak's "Il mio tesoro" goes occasionally haywire in coloratura passages, there's a good coloratura technique at the base of it.

The biggest puzzle is Maria Luigia Borsi's Donna Elvira. She's a throwback to an era when the likes of Birgit Nilsson sang Mozart roles if only because she could (more or less). It's a big, bracing, inflexible voice that seems quite out of place here until she gets to "Mi tradi"; then it suddenly takes on a gracefulness in phrases where you'd least expect it to.

Mehta's viewpoint is one that suggests that the past 25 years of Mozart performance practice hasn't happened. His Mozart isn't Furtwänglerian but something akin to Karl Böhm's, with cleaner sonorities but plenty of authority. When not accommodating singers his pacing is intelligent. Tension and release happen in all the right places. Perhaps the best way to hear this performance (if at all) is to think of it as a historic recording that just happens to have been made two years ago. Then again, time might be better spent with any number of true historic recordings from 1950s Salzburg. **David Patrick Stearns**

## Previn

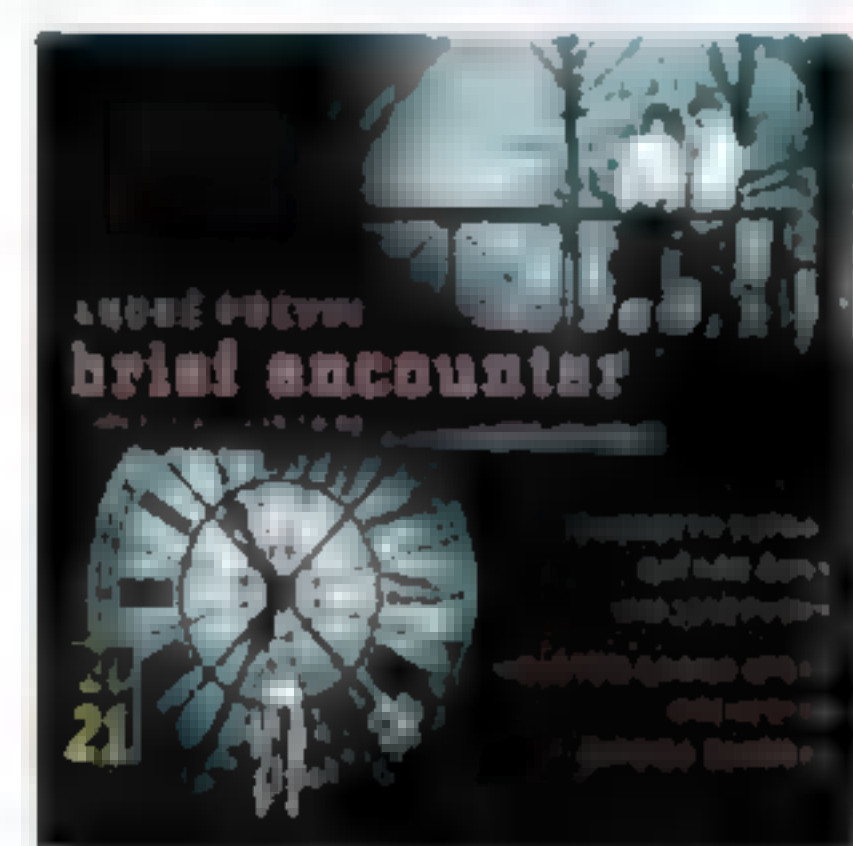
### Brief Encounter

Elizabeth Futral *sop* ..... Laura Jesson  
Nathan Gunn *bar* ..... Alec Harvey  
Kim Josephson *bar* ..... Fred Jesson  
Meredith Arwady *contralto* ..... Myrtle Bagot  
Robert Orth *bar* ..... Albert Godby  
Rebekah Camm *sop* ..... Dolly Messiter  
Adam Cioffari *bar* ..... Stanley  
Alicia Gianni *sop* ..... Beryl  
James J Kee *bar* ..... Doctor Graves  
Jamie Barton *mez* ..... Mary Norton  
Faith Sherman *mez* ..... Mrs Rowlandson  
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra /  
Patrick Summers

DG © 2 477 9351GH2 (123' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Wortham Theater, Houston,  
May 2009

**Forget the film and Rachmaninov – this is the score Previn was destined to write**



Any new operatic adaptation of *Brief Encounter* can't help but face barriers, sociological and otherwise. The classic 1945 film about an illicit but chaste affair between two married middle-aged, middle-class persons revolves around a sexual repression and genteel romanticism that are quite foreign to the 21st century –

my reaction, at least, upon revisiting the world crafted by David Lean's direction and Noël Coward's screenplay. Also, listeners lacking sympathy for current neo-tonal operas won't love this one, especially since, at its 2009 Houston Grand Opera premiere, it was widely observed that the score's central motif quotes Leonard Bernstein's "Make Our Garden Grow".

Some 30 minutes into the opera not one of those barriers existed. This is the score I've been waiting for Previn to write ever since his 1984 Piano Concerto, which begins so arrestingly but lapses into second-hand ideas – a case of his compositional facility working against him. His works have steadily become more consistent and personal, though *A Streetcar Named Desire*, for all its luscious arias, was stymied (and slowed) by an overly wordy libretto. Words are less important (and numerous) in *Brief Encounter*'s portrait of inner upheaval – one that Previn's music reveals with a richness that cinema cannot.

The score's basic palette is upper range, *mezzo-piano* string-writing with harmonies that are winningly amorphous but not expressively vague. For all the certainty of the characters' routine-laden outside lives, their romantic dilemma is so hopeless that the music never has anything close to a conventional harmonic resolution.

Incidental solos need not be imposing to project eloquent strokes of characterisation, such as the mellow, woozy *glissandos* that accompany the guilty couple's champagne luncheon. John Caird's libretto, which intelligently departs from the film in ways great and small, is mostly short singable lines, using mundane pleasantries as the thinnest veneer for what lies underneath. Even the external musical descriptions that take Previn back to his film-score roots – like the chugging trains that take the couple in opposite directions – have an extra poetic dimension that keeps them from seeming overly obvious.

The opera's grand dimensions and intimate manner are a challenge for anyone playing lead characters. Even with a generous vibrato that gives her medium-weight voice extra scale, Elizabeth Futral achieves a degree of emotional specificity that makes her one of the best singing actresses around. Nathan Gunn matches her with a baritone that scales down to practically nothing – important in a love story in which the man is the needier of the two. Also important is Kim Josephson's touching portrait of Laura's husband that tells you that their marriage wasn't a mistake.

The recording's problem is mainly balance: the orchestra feels far from the singers; it's even hard to access Patrick Summers's conducting. In this opera, voices and instruments must hug each other.

**David Patrick Stearns**

## 'The Maltese Tenor'

**Bizet** The Pearl Fishers – De mon amie... Leïla, Leïla! Dieu puissant<sup>a</sup> **Boito** Mefistofele – Dai campi, dai prati; Giunto sul passo estremo  
**Gounod** Faust – Salut, demeure chaste et pure!  
**Massenet** Manon – Ah! fuyez, douce image!  
**Offenbach** Les contes d'Hoffmann – Il était une fois à la cour d'Eisenach<sup>b</sup> **Puccini** La bohème – Che gelida manina; O soave fanciulla<sup>a</sup>. Manon Lescaut – Tra voi, belle, brune e bionde; Donna non vidi mai. Tosca – Recondita armonia; È lucevan le stelle **Verdi** Un ballo in maschera – Ma se m'è forza. Luisa Miller – Oh! fede negar potessi... Quando le sere al placido. Simon Boccanegra – O inferno! Amelia qui!... Sento avvampar nell'anima

Joseph Calleja *ten* with <sup>a</sup>Aleksandra Kurzak *sop*  
<sup>b</sup>Chorus of the Grand Théâtre, Geneva  
(men's voices); Suisse Romande Orchestra /  
Marco Armiliato

Decca © 478 2720DH (65' • DDD)

**Calleja ups the stakes with a recital that pits him against the big boys**



Here Joseph Calleja has decisively entered the Three Tenors zone – and I wish he'd waited a few more years. His recording debut some five years ago showed an

instantly recognisable voice and artistic sensibility that was favourably compared to Björling and Gedda. The voice had a wonderful boyish quality and heart-melting vulnerability. Now he's singing excerpts from *Tosca*, *Ballo in maschera* and other *spinto* roles, and pushing his voice a bit more. His distinctive fast vibrato isn't as fast as before – in the album notes he kind of apologises for it – but is less attractive and more aggressive when the voice is pushed hard.

Calleja can still get down to a *pianissimo* in a way that few can, such as in the *Luisa Miller* scene, which is one of the best items thanks to the way he gives the vocal line a flattering lilt. After his Covent Garden success in *Simon Boccanegra*, the inclusion of the Act 2 scena "O inferno" – another high-point – will be a welcome souvenir. But he sounds no more vocally or interpretatively precise with the Kleinzach song from *The Tales of Hoffmann* than he did at the Met last season. With so much more light than shade, the recital takes on a sameness.

Only occasionally do you sense that the arias are from roles Calleja hasn't yet sung. And there are glimpses of his younger self in passages of "Ah! fuyez, douce image!" from Massenet's *Manon* and the *Pearl Fishers* excerpt – "young Gedda" repertoire. But those are two arias out of 15. Calleja may well gain many more admirers from this disc but he's also going to leave some behind.

**David Patrick Stearns**



# DVD & Blu-ray

Solti's live Elgar 2 • Mahler double at the Proms • Gerald Finley's Don Giovanni

## Brahms • Elgar • Wagner

**Brahms** Symphony No 1, Op 68 **Elgar** Cello Concerto, Op 85<sup>a</sup> **Wagner** Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg – Prelude, Act 3  
<sup>a</sup>Alisa Weilerstein *vs* Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Daniel Barenboim  
EuroArts © 205 8068 (89' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo, DD 5.1 & DTS 5.1 • 0)  
Recorded live at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, April 30 & May 1, 2010

**Oxonian antics and a gripping Elgar – Barenboim's first since Jacqueline du Pré**



I wonder if any students who leapt off Magdalen Bridge on May 1 last year made their bedraggled way to the Sheldonian for a trenchant reflection on their midsummer madness? Barenboim might have joined them in days gone by; now his flaunted anachronism is to out-Knappertsbusch everyone in the Wagner Prelude and squeeze a sound that fills the Berlin Philharmonie into a space a quarter the size. Six double basses counts as the BPO Chamber Orchestra. This is perfect for the Elgar but works less well in the Brahms. Barenboim conveys a superb vertical grasp of the argument. Everyone knows where they stand and act. But his spans are larger than Brahms's own: if you think of the first movement as a sine wave, Barenboim's shapes are too broad, not to say artificial, so that the second half of the first-movement exposition must slow to a crawl – a tense crawl, but a crawl all the same – while the last few bars into the recapitulation are already thundering towards their goal with a momentum that doesn't allow the clinching bass-line to register as such: it's too absorbed into a flow larger than itself. It's bold and impressive and sweeps us along with it but it's not life-changing (as one enthusiastic reviewer claimed at the time) and it's not really Brahms-changing either.

The Elgar, however, is gripping from the very start, fully charged with the emotion that one might expect to inflame Barenboim's first return to the piece since accompanying Jacqueline du Pré. I have never heard the first movement projected so clearly and convincingly as one long span and it allows the whole of the concerto to unfold in one

unbroken, elegiac song. The boldness of the conception would have been even more sustained had they taken the *Adagio* a notch faster, but how Alisa Weilerstein throws herself into those dicey upward sequences; her bow-hold is very high, like a violinist's. She never holds back and takes some impressive risks, perhaps inspired by an accompaniment that convinces me, for the time, of the Berlin Philharmonic being the finest orchestra for Elgar, as well as for everything else. **Peter Quantrill**

## Elgar

Symphony No 2, Op 63<sup>a</sup>.  
Variations on an Original Theme, 'Enigma', Op 36<sup>b</sup>  
**London Philharmonic Orchestra / Georg Solti**  
ICA Classics © ICAD5011 (84' • NTSC • 4:3 • LPCM mono • 0)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, <sup>a</sup>February 13, 1975; <sup>b</sup>September 25, 1979

**A bracing pair of Elgar performances deservedly rescued from the archives**



Between 1972 and 1980, Sir Georg Solti set down a number of hugely stimulating Elgar recordings for Decca; indeed, his dynamic yet wonderfully humane versions of the two symphonies (modelled to

a large degree on the composer's electrifying interpretations) can still hold their own against all comers nearly four decades on.

ICA Classics' enterprising restoration of two performances with the LPO from the Royal Festival Hall (both originally broadcast on BBC2) is especially valuable for what is surely Solti's most successful reading of the *Enigma* Variations. This finds the maestro on infinitely more involving form than on either of his commercial recordings (the live VPO remake from 1996 is, on the whole, preferable to the worryingly slick 1974 studio version with the Chicago SO). "Nimrod" in particular is paced to flowing perfection, while the explosive virtuosity of "WMB", "Troyte" and "GRS" is most satisfyingly counterbalanced by the fragrant poetry and winsome delicacy of "Ysobel", "WN" and "Dorabella".

The February 1975 performance of the Second Symphony immediately preceded the Decca sessions in Kingsway Hall. It is, quite

simply, a document to treasure, with the LPO (as on the commercial recording) galvanised to thrilling effect by Solti's prodigiously energetic presence on the podium (one wouldn't want to be on the end of one of his whiplash left-arm jabs). Not surprisingly, perhaps, there's an extra edge-of-seat volatility and expressive freedom on show, the secondary material in both the first movement and *Scherzo* shaped with generous flexibility by a conductor who is clearly in love with the music. Otherwise, both accounts exhibit the same thrustingly purposeful manner, with the slow movement attaining even greater levels of noble intensity and rapt concentration than in the studio. The epilogue is profoundly moving in its valedictory radiance and burnished glow.

Both the picture quality and full-blooded (mono) sound are perfectly acceptable (though principal viola player Rusen Günes's contribution in "Dorabella" would have benefited from a rather less shy balance). The direction, too, is mercifully undistracting throughout. Most rewarding – and a genuine tonic to boot! **Andrew Achenbach**

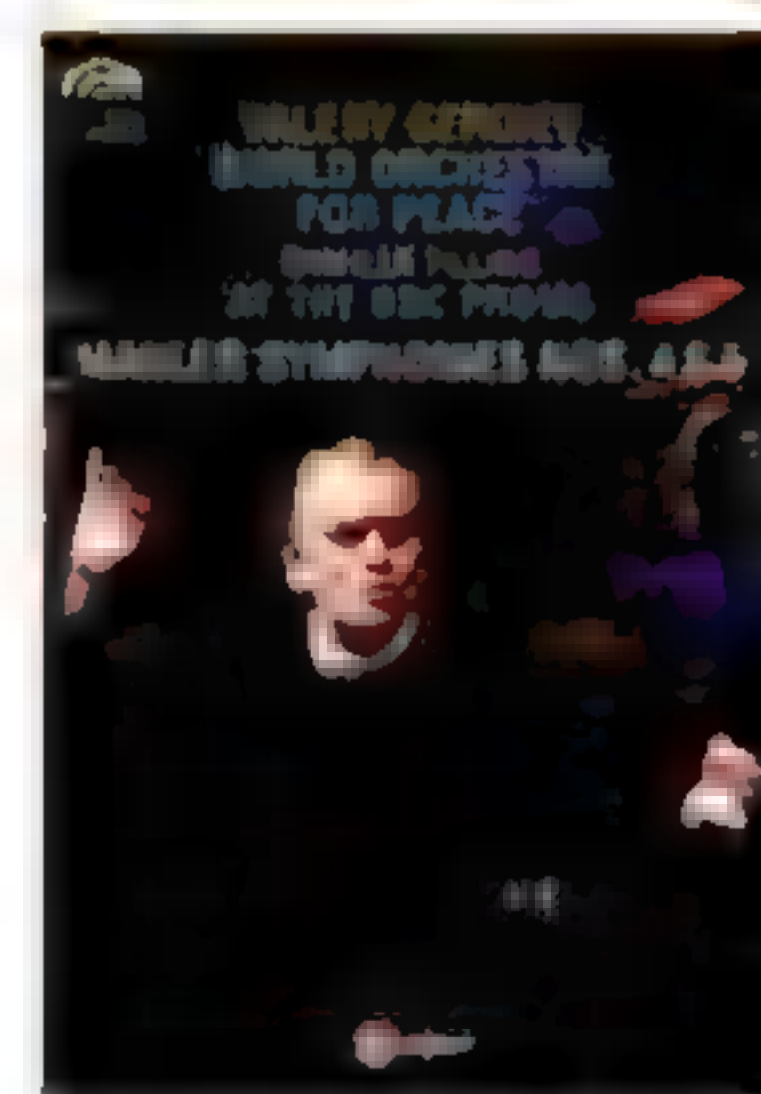
## Mahler

Symphonies – No 4<sup>a</sup>; No 5  
<sup>a</sup>Camilla Tilling *sop*  
**World Orchestra for Peace / Valery Gergiev**  
C major © 702608 (155' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo & DTS 5.1 • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Royal Albert Hall, London, August 5, 2010

Bonus feature: documentary on the founding of the World Orchestra for Peace

**A long night at the Proms as Gergiev performs two symphonies back to back**



What is this, a concert, a lecture or a marathon? Donald Mitchell's still-authoritative exegesis (Faber: 1975) reveals how the Fourth functions "as a bridge between two contrasted styles of approach to the concept

of symphony": Mahler "wrote himself out of his *Wunderhorn* period" and into a new Classicism with the Fifth. Would you like to find out how by listening to the two symphonies back to back? Thousands did last summer, and you've the pause button to permit more than a hastily downed tonic



(with or without gin) before returning to the contrapuntal fray. But, for better or worse, you're tied into the exhaustion of a single, long evening at the Proms.

The consequences are less telling when the end is in sight, where adrenaline carries everyone through a blistering finale to the Fifth, than in the Fourth, which only wakes up with Camilla Tilling's alluring display of Heaven's delights, far more knowing now than on her recording with Benjamin Zander (Telarc, A/01). The accompanying featurette touches on how gathering players from across the world to work with a famously globetrotting maestro results in alarmingly attenuated rehearsal time, and the subtle shifts of the Fourth's intricate negotiation between artless song and its artful instrumental deformations are a perilous place to warm up at the best of times.

So let's move to the Fifth, which is at one with the hall and the celebratory spirit of the occasion, in the kind of unabashed festival of angst that must have turned countless teenagers (not only me) on to Mahler. Misgivings about this most scherzoid of even Mahler's works, sly or pensive reflections on his unstable relationships with Vienna and Bach (property of Bernstein, Tilson Thomas, Stenz and others) are obliterated even more thoroughly than on Gergiev's LSO Live account (4/11), not least thanks to the heroics of the young first trumpet, Timur Martynov. The *Adagietto* belongs shamelessly to the spirit of the dead JFK, not the young Alma. One can only marvel at the collective skill and intuition that guides this tatterdemalion band through a heavy-metal thrash second movement and at Gergiev's power of selective concentration, worthy of Karajan. This might be the place to refer earnestly to the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, but there really is no comparison. **Peter Quantrill**

## Mozart

Don Giovanni

**Gerald Finley** bar.....Don Giovanni  
**Anna Samuil** sop.....Donna Anna  
**Kate Royal** sop.....Donna Elvira  
**Anna Virovlansky** sop.....Zerlina  
**William Burden** ten.....Don Ottavio  
**Luca Pisaroni** bass-bar.....Leporello  
**Guido Loconsolo** bar.....Masetto  
**Brindley Sherratt** bass.....Commendatore  
**Glyndebourne Chorus; Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment / Vladimir Jurowski**

Stage director **Jonathan Kent**

Video director **Peter Maniura**

EMI (M) (2) DVD 072017-9 (3h 14' • NTSC • 16:9 • LPCM stereo & DTS 5.1 • 0 • S/N/s)

Recorded live 2010

Bonus features: 'Don Giovanni Unmasked';

'Designs on Don Giovanni'

**Gerald Finley convinces as the Don in the recent Glyndebourne production**



Jonathan Kent follows up his superb *Fairy Queen* with a gripping account of what some people consider to be Mozart's "problem opera". It is set in 1960, the world of *La dolce vita*, all scarves and dark glasses; but the location is Franco's Spain (where the Fellini film was banned until after the monster's death). In the context of his production Kent rarely puts a foot wrong.

There's a geniality about his stage presence that makes Gerald Finley more suited, I suspect, to Figaro and Leporello than to the Count and Don Giovanni. But his assumption of Giovanni is completely convincing. He can be a vicious thug – no gentlemanly fencing for him, he smashes the Commendatore's face with a brick – and of course he can turn on the charm. His most important relationship, as Finley puts it in one of the two bonus features, is with Leporello, each character both irritated by and dependent on the other. Finley's embarrassed grins, as he tries to convince Donna Anna and Don Ottavio that Donna Elvira is mad, are a joy to behold; and his fear before the confrontation with the Commendatore in the supper scene is palpable. Finley sings as well as he acts, apart from an oddly unhoneyed Serenade.

Kent's direction of the women is telling. Prim, middle-aged Ottavio doesn't stand a chance against Anna's obsession with her father. At the end, the besotted Elvira touches the corpse of Giovanni, who lies in the same position as the murdered Commendatore – a nice touch. But I think that Kent is wrong to have Giovanni humping Zerlina against a wall before her rescue by Elvira, an important feature of the opera surely being Giovanni's signal failure to seduce anyone at all.

Vladimir Jurowski chooses the Vienna version: so out goes "Il mio tesoro", in comes the duet where Zerlina threatens Leporello and ties him up. It's scarcely credible that nobody at EMI bothered to adapt Richard Osborne's synopsis, reprinted from an earlier recording, which follows the standard version. The subtitles tend to the approximate. The singing is fine and the OAE play like angels.

**Richard Lawrence**

## Carlos Kleiber

Carlos Kleiber – 'I am Lost to the World'

Video director **Georg Wübbolt**

C Major (F) DVD 705608

(60' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo • 0)

## Carlos Kleiber

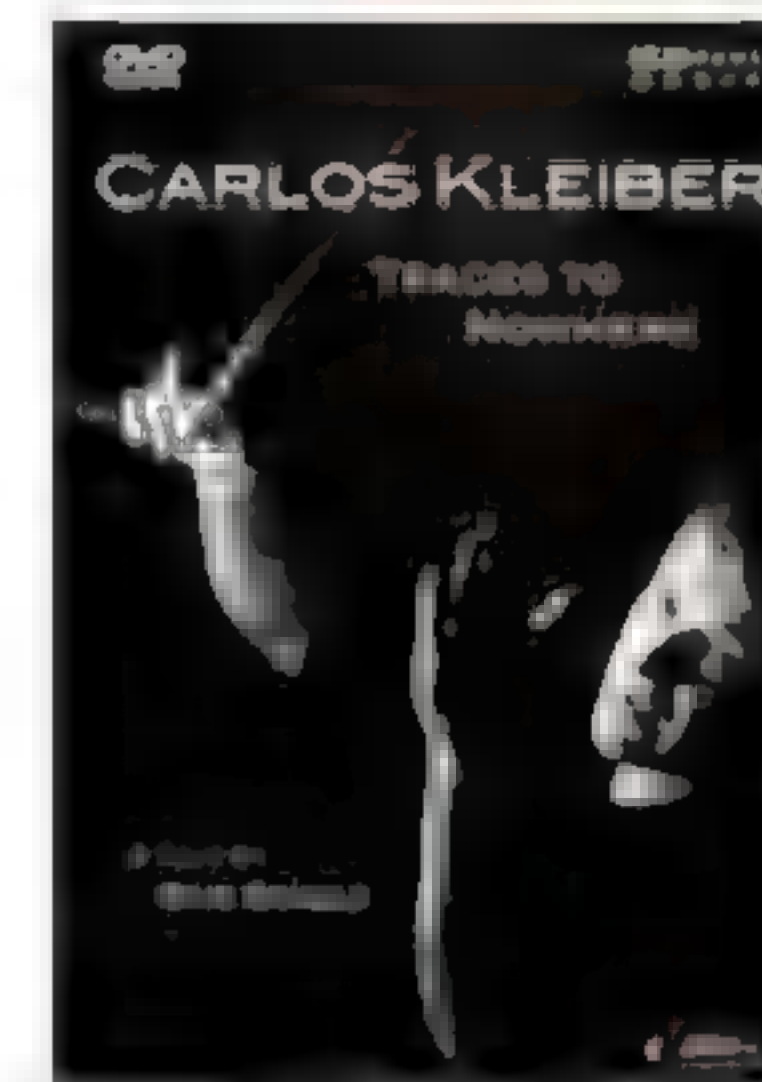
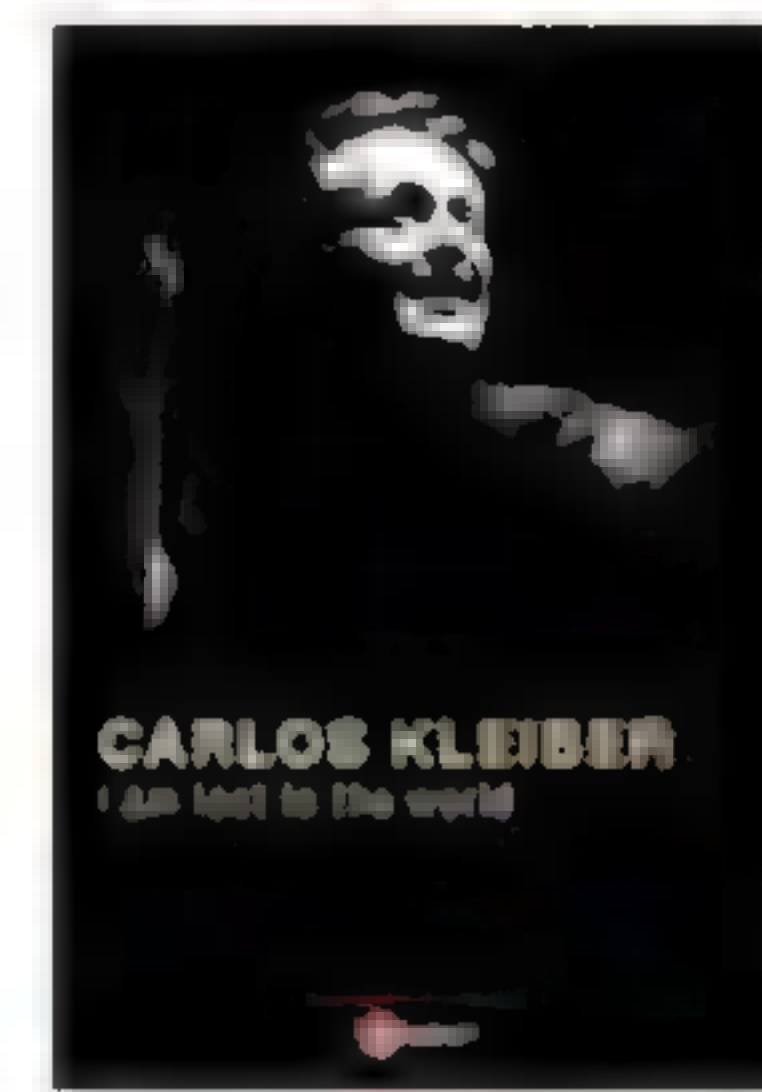
Carlos Kleiber – 'Traces to Nowhere'

Video director **Eric Schulz**

Arthaus Musik (F) DVD 101 553

(72' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo • 0)

## Two films exploring the enigma of the charismatic conductor



The cult of Carlos Kleiber grows apace. Seven years after his death, the conductor who turned cancellations and walk-outs into an art form is more widely venerated than in his lifetime, and was recently voted by his peers "the greatest conductor of all time".

What does that mean? Repertoire – small and ever shrinking; range of music – selected symphonies of Beethoven and Brahms, many operas, Viennese music; appearances –

sporadic and increasingly rare; baton technique – superb; musicality – unmatched; charisma and communication – a class of his own. What an intriguing, contradictory figure he presents, made all the more alluring by his refusal to play the media game. A figure ripe, then, for a documentary – or two – and despite sharing many of the same talking heads and some archive footage, these films complement each other as character studies rather than career narratives. Both have extensive excerpts of Kleiber in rehearsal, enabling us to see how he strove for the perfection that marked him as a musician and plagued him as a man, capturing in his expressive face both the ecstasy and frustration of the process. Watching him, one begins to understand the result of the poll and why so many fine musicians revered him. The musical results aside, for charm and screen presence Kleiber is off the score-card.

Georg Wübbolt's *I am Lost to the World* includes a rare radio interview with Kleiber and emphasises the destructive/inspirational relationship with his famous conductor father Erich. It is by no means a hagiographic portrait ("He made a fool of a lot of people," says one contributor. "That was not nice.") and is frank about his serial womanising. The film is somewhat spoilt by the occasional intrusive narration voiced by an accented German bass-baritone in imperfect English ("Kleiber has always forewent Berlin").

"Traces to Nowhere" directed by Eric Schulz boasts contributions from Kleiber's sister Veronika (serene, thoughtful), Plácido Domingo (under-prepared) and Brigitte Fassbaender (clearly a close friend). Schultz book-ends the film by following the road back to Konjšica, Kleiber's Slovenia hideaway where he was found dead by one of his two children (neither of whom is referred to in either film). Suicide? Probably not; but he refused medical intervention for an easily treatable prostate cancer. It was only after his funeral a week later that his death was made public. Very Kleiber.



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"As far as possible you should leave no traces behind in life" was a favourite Chinese saying of his. The fact that we have such vivid traces on film and disc is cause to rejoice for, as one musician who played under him says of his exhilarating *Die Fledermaus* Overture (but really referring to all Kleiber performances): "You can do it differently, of course, but you definitely can't do it better. Actually," he adds after a pause, "I don't even think you can do it differently." **Jeremy Nicholas**

## 'Spectral Strands'

**M Edwards** 24/7: freedom fried<sup>a</sup> **Grisey** Prologue<sup>b</sup>

**Saariaho** Vent nocturne<sup>c</sup> **Scelsi** Manto I<sup>d</sup>

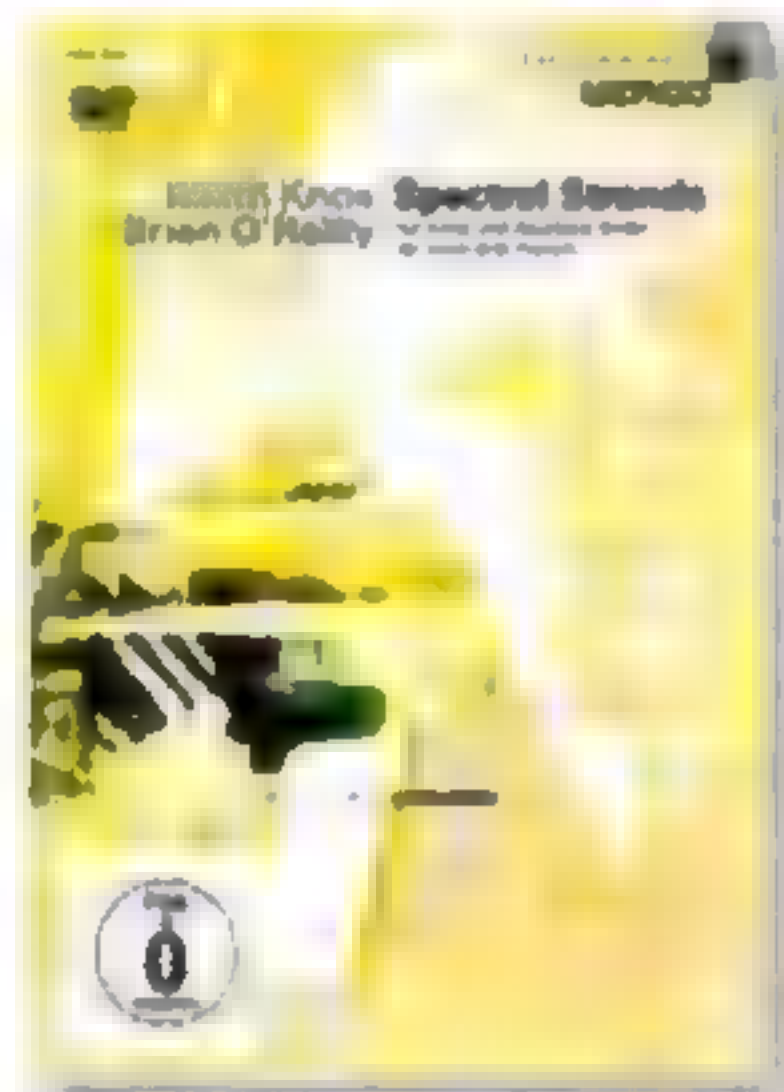
**Sciarrino** Notturmo brillante I-3<sup>e</sup>

**Garth Knox** <sup>bcd</sup> *va/ra d'amore* <sup>a</sup> **Michael Edwards**,

<sup>b</sup> **Götz Dipper**, **Joachim Gossmann** *elects*

Wergo (D) DVD WER2062-5 (56' • NTSC • PCM stereo & DTS 5.0 • 0)

**Clear musical narratives engender tonics for the eye from Brian O'Reilly**

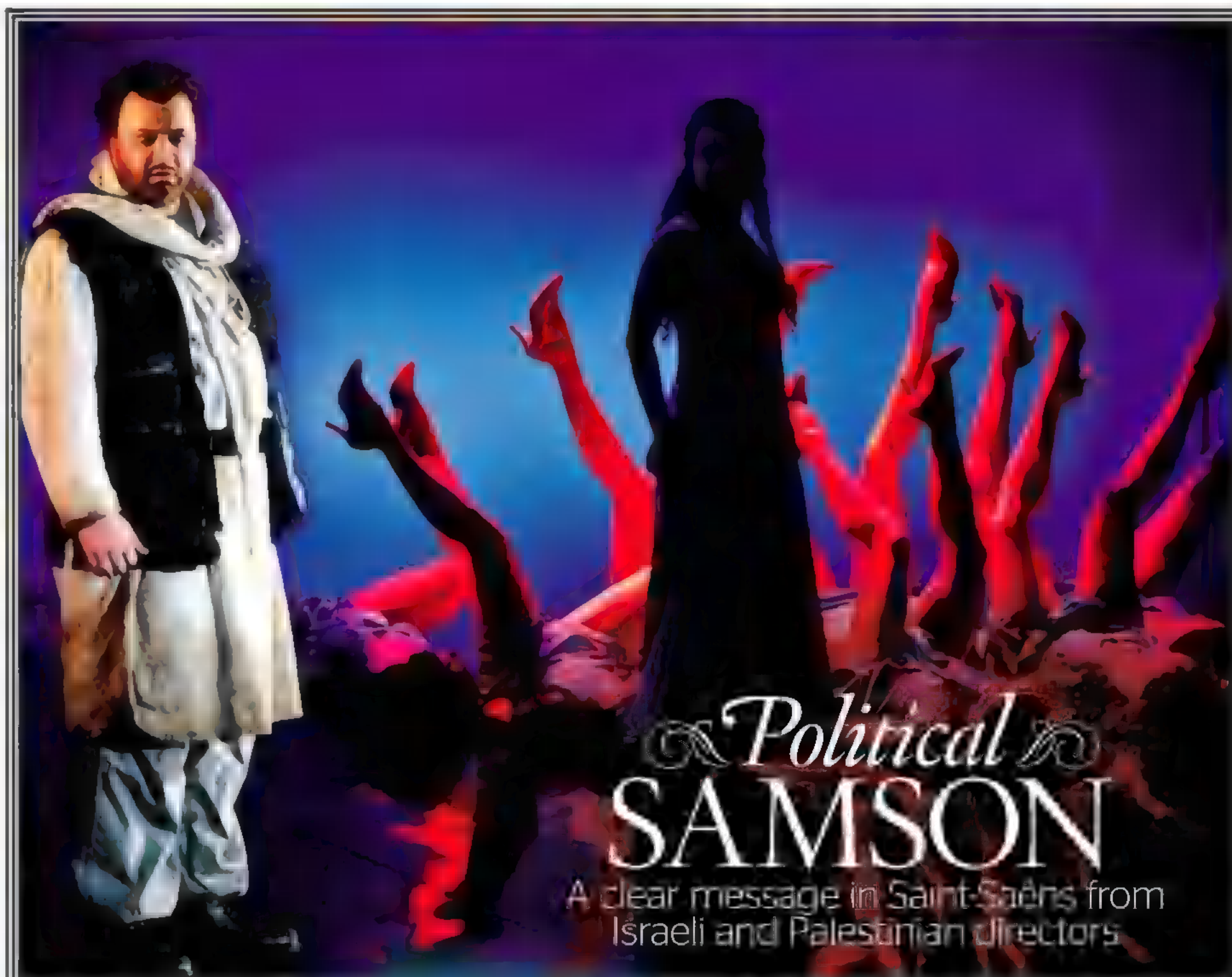


As Garth Knox plays, Irish-American video artist Brian O'Reilly reaches inside the vibrating surfaces of these compositions by Scelsi, Sciarrino, Grisey, Saariaho and Michael Edwards to produce an art that is happily impossible to label:

what correlation do O'Reilly's fleeting shapes and forms have with the music upon which they are commenting? Sometimes his camera captures the strings, bow and frame of Knox's viola moving with the curvature of the music, images which smudge into various shades of flickering darkness or atomise across the screen.

Annoyingly, Wergo's booklet contains little information about how O'Reilly operates. But the intriguing question from a musician's point of view is whether his visuals are momentous enough to alter your perspective on the music. A troupe of dancing girls, frankly, couldn't do anything to rescue Kaija Saariaho's *Vent nocturne* (2006). The recent collapse of her aesthetic towards soft-centred ambience just isn't for me; and, conversely, the visceral impact of Sciarrino's transonic, kaleidoscopic string textures still make the ears work overtime, leaving the eyes to play catch-up.

So why do Michael Edwards's 24/7: *freedom fried* for viola d'amore and live electronics (2006) and Gérard Grisey's spectral classic *Prologue* (1976) come off best? Perhaps because both are traced around such a clear narrative trajectory. Edwards's piece cultivates an oasis of calm from turbulent beginnings; Grisey wires the viola inside resonating chambers designed to isolate individual pitches from the generality of his slowly evolving viola line, and sustains them like a doppelgänger effect. When that process hits critical mass, throwing multi-directional sound far and wide, the ears focus hard but the eyes have it. **Phillip Clark**



## Saint-Saëns

**Samson et Dalila**

**Torsten Kerl** *ten* ..... Samson

**Marianna Tarasova** *mez* ..... Dalila

**Nikola Mijailović** *bar* ..... High Priest

**Milcho Borovinov** *bass* ..... Abimélech

**Tijl Faveyts** *bass* ..... Old Hebrew

**Gijs Van der Linden** *ten* ..... Messenger

**Thorsten Büttner** *ten* ..... First Philistine

**Onno Pels** *bass* ..... Second Philistine

**Chorus and Symphony Orchestra of Flanders Opera / Tomáš Netopil**

**Stage directors Omri Nitzan, Amir Nizar Zuabi**

**Video director Willy Vanduren**

EuroArts (D) DVD 205 8628 (121' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo and DTS 5.0 • 0 • s)

Recorded live, May 8, 2009

*Selected comparisons:*

*Levine* (DG) 073 0599GH

*C Davis* (WARN) 5101 12283-2



The curtain goes up to reveal a divided stage, with Old Testament Israelites bewailing their lot on the lower level while an elegant party in modern dress is going on above. This is

*Samson et Dalila* with a contemporary political message. The joint directors of Flanders Opera's production, Israeli Omri Nitzan and Palestinian Amir Nizar Zuabi, say on the DVD's bonus track that they had the lesson of Gaza in mind, though what they really want to do is protest against any occupation by one people of another's land, wherever it happens. Their

heart is clearly in the right place but whether they have created a viable night at the opera is less certain. On Antwerp's small stage the settings are by necessity stark and simple – the gigantic red flower behind Delilah's bed being the least subtle of their visual statements. In political terms the updating works well, with the High Priest's followers as a gang of balaclava-clad military thugs and Samson himself as a suicide bomber. But none of the characters comes alive and the production is apt to go laughably over the top. Samson and Delilah's love-making falls prey to some silly business with a gun, and the B-movie scene where semi-naked models parade on the catwalk with an array of military hardware is enough to make James Bond blush.

Musically, the standard is decent to good. The dark and striking Marianna Tarasova is well cast as Delilah and smoulders menacingly through her arias, though she sometimes seems strangely short of breath. By her side Torsten Kerl is rather a blank page as Samson, though his impassive presence is belied by the force of his singing. Nikola Mijailović's High Priest and the young Abimélech of Milcho Borovinov are adequate. Tomáš Netopil, the conductor, leads a mostly spirited performance, well captured by the EuroArts engineers. There are some good points here but so long as the competition includes the glorious stage designs of Sidney Nolan on the Royal Opera's DVD and the voices of Plácido Domingo and Olga Borodina at the Met, this could not be a first choice. **Richard Fairman**



Rob Cowan's monthly survey of reissues and archive recordings

# Rare but not forgotten

The first electric Beethoven Violin Concerto • Krips conducts Schubert

**W**ho do you reckon made the first electrical recording of Beethoven's Violin Concerto? Many will tell you that it was Fritz Kreisler, recorded in Berlin in 1926 under Leo Blech for HMV – but it wasn't. A few months earlier, Willem Mengelberg's concertmaster at the Concertgebouw, **Louis Zimmermann**, recorded the Concerto for Columbia with an unnamed studio orchestra and conductor (long assumed to be Mengelberg himself, though that's now thought unlikely). Mark Obert-Thorn's restoration on the Historic Recordings label conveys a robust, old-world performance very much in the Huberman-Joachim-Busch mould, with plentiful *portamento* and fairly swift tempi – though the first movement's timing of 19'02" accommodates one of the shortest cadenzas on record (around 50 seconds). Although hardly note-perfect, it's an engaging performance and the "bonus" recording of the *Ghost* Trio with the Concertgebouw Trio (with Zimmermann leading) is musically even more compelling.

Of equal interest is an extraordinary performance of Schubert's "Great C major" Symphony recorded, again for Columbia, in Fyvie Hall, London, by the Hallé Orchestra under **Hamilton Harty**, the year 1928, the current reissue context Pristine Audio and another superb Obert-Thorn transfer. Harty beats a hefty *Andante* introduction with no *accelerando*, then throws us straight into the *Allegro* (with "echo" dynamics for the second subject). His *Andante* second movement is pert and imperious, his *Scherzo* fast and furious with a brightly lit Trio taken in tempo, while the finale includes – wait for it! – a bell (beam up around 5'18"). The coupling, from a year later, is **Gaspar Cassadó's** off-the-wall transcription (and enlargement) of Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata into a zany "Cello Concerto". Harty conducts a "Symphony Orchestra" and the major attraction here is Cassadó's lyrical playing.

As to the "Great C major", there are four more, including one by the LSO under **Antal Dorati** which arrives courtesy of the Antal Dorati Centenary Society, which has been busy treating us to variable transfers of RCA and Mercury Dorati recordings that have never previously made it to CD. The Schubert, though, is a live performance given in October 1960 at the Swansea Festival. The mono sound is more than acceptable, the performance quite fabulous. Again, the first movement's introduction treads steadily and the *Allegro* (much swifter than Harty's) flies off with exciting abruptness. The range of dynamics is enormous, the close of the first movement fiercely driven à la Toscanini, as are the *Scherzo* and finale. It's an honest, no-holds-barred performance and one hopes that the Society will be able to locate a serviceable tape of a 1960 live LSO *Rite of Spring*, which many people claim was the finest they ever heard. The coupling is the Concertino No 2 by Unico Willem van Wassenauer.

The remaining three Schubert Ninths are all conducted by **Josef Krips**, two of them Decca recordings reissued by Australian Eloquence. The stereo LSO recording is from 1958 (it comes coupled with a 1969 VPO *Unfinished*), whereas its 1952 Concertgebouw predecessor shares

disc-space with a fine Beethoven Fourth from the following year. The third (live) version is part of a three-CD "Josef Krips Edition" on Cascaville, which also includes Mozart's Requiem and Beethoven's Violin Concerto with Isaac Stern, and dates from 1954 (the bonus is an energetic *Oberon* Overture). Comparisons are interesting, especially at the close of the symphony's first movement, where Krips broadens the pace considerably, with a monumental thrust in Amsterdam that isn't quite matched by the London recording but where the live version with the Orchestre National de la RTF has the most exciting effect, with prominent brass and heavily weighted string accents. The LSO Ninth is the most genial, the Concertgebouw the most alert and best played, while the live relay is the one that will get your pulse racing.

Among Eloquence's other Krips reissues is a Brahms/Schumann double-pack that, for me at least, was something of a humbling experience. I'd previously heard the 1950 Decca Brahms Fourth on Pristine which, although perfectly adequate as transfers go, rather dulls the edge of the LSO's playing. By accessing the mastertape, Eloquence has managed to transform what previously sounded routine into a far more invigorating experience. The other symphonies featured are in stereo, the Schumann First and Fourth with the LSO (a fairly famous coupling in its day) very musical and non-aggressive, as was invariably Krips's way, and the Brahms First (VPO) truthfully balanced both as sound and as interpretation. I was pleased to see Krips's 1954 LPO recording of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* feature in the series, a highlight being Norma Procter's warmly expressive contralto. And lastly, a further symphonic double-pack, notable in particular for stereo VPO recordings of Haydn's Symphonies Nos 94 and 9, sharing the programme with vigorous LSO versions of No 92 (terrific finale) and 104, Schubert's Sixth and Mendelssohn's Fourth.

## THE RECORDINGS

**Beethoven** Vn Conc. Ghost Trio **Zimmermann**  
Historic Recordings (M) HRCDO0100

**Schubert** Sym No 9. 'Vc Conc' **Cassadó, Harty**  
Pristine Audio (S) PASC282

**Schubert** Sym No 9 **Dorati**  
Antal Dorati Centenary Society (M) ADL201

**Schubert** Syms Nos 8 & 9 **Krips**  
Decca Eloquence (S) 480 4725

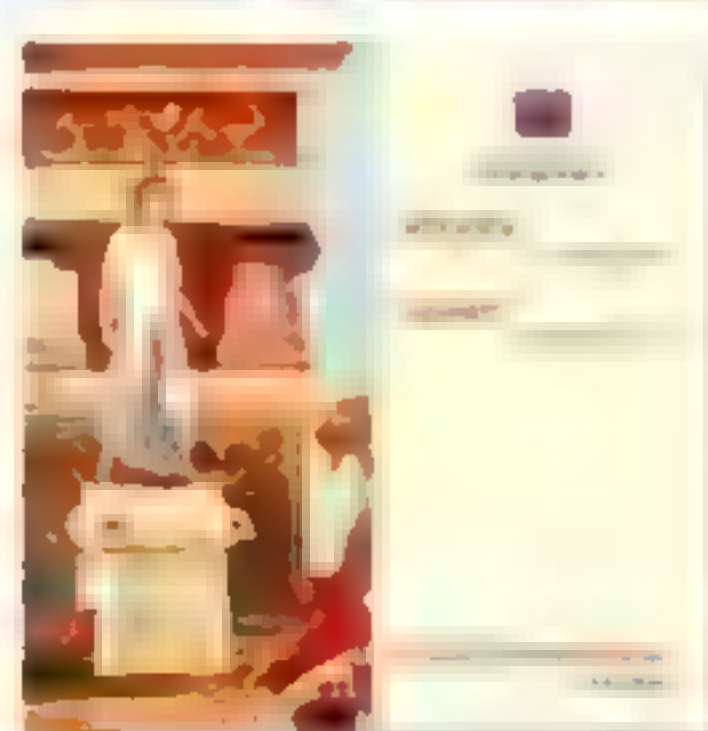
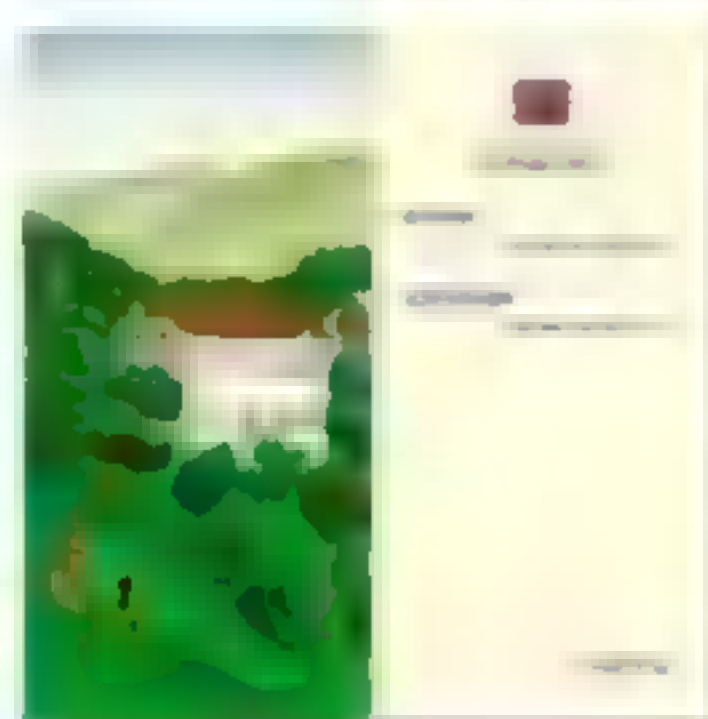
**Schubert** Sym No 9 **Beethoven** Sym No 4 **Krips**  
Decca Eloquence (S) 480 2802

**Schubert** Sym No 9 **Weber** Oberon Ov **Krips**  
Cascaville (M) VEL3155

**Brahms. Schumann** Syms **Krips**  
Decca Eloquence (S) ② 480 4325

**Mendelssohn** *Elijah* **Krips**  
Decca Eloquence (S) ② 480 4334

**Haydn. Mendelssohn. Schubert** Syms **Krips**  
Decca Eloquence (S) ② 480 4331





'The Schumann First  
and Fourth are very  
musical and non-  
aggressive, as was  
invariably Krips's way'





# Stalwarts and surprises

Treasure from the Universal archives and another pianist called Richter

**E**loquence's recent archival work on behalf of past masters of the baton doesn't stop at Josef Krips. There's **Pierre Monteux**, whose 1959 Vienna Philharmonic recordings of Haydn's *Clock* and *Surprise* Symphonies haven't been available in tandem for some while but which now come coupled with Brahms's *Variations on a Theme of Haydn* (LSO, 1958). And there are two CDs featuring **Karl Böhm** and the Vienna Philharmonic, the first programming a persuasive Brahms Third (1953) with a quartet of Weber overtures (1951), the other a worthy Beethoven Eighth (1953) with Schubert's Symphonies No 5 and 8 (1954), the *Unfinished* being particularly impressive (sample the beginning of the development section).

One of the most surprising (and valuable) vintage reissues of recent months comes from Pristine Audio, which offers us a first UK release of a 1952 New York recording of Bartók's Sonata for two pianos and percussion (the pianists are Gerson Yessin and Raymond Viola) conducted by **Leopold Stokowski**. To be honest, prior to hearing it I didn't know what to expect – conducted versions of this work are very rare – but the resulting performance really does fan the flames, sometimes surging forth at white heat, at other times embarking on an unusually free course but always calling on a sensitivity to colour and feeling for nuance that were among Stokowski's unique hallmarks. The couplings are Morton Gould's *Dance Variations* (with pianists Whittemore and Lowe and the San Francisco Symphony, 1953) and Schoenberg's darkly swooning *Verklärte Nacht* (1952), where Stokowski draws from his own band playing that isn't merely luscious but intimately expressive as well.

Expressivity of a quite different kind informs the uncompromisingly direct piano-playing of **Hans Richter-Haaser**, whose 1950s/'60s EMI recordings of 13 Beethoven sonatas (including the first and last three plus the *Hammerklavier*), the *Diabelli* Variations and some smaller works share a six-CD French-originated collection with the last three concertos (the last two also out on Testament). The playing is bold, assertive, magisterial, essentially masculine, classical in its lines and focused almost to a fault. Op 111, the *Diabellis* and the Fourth Concerto are given magnificent readings, with the others not too far behind. The transfers more than pass muster, though the sound quality of the originals is decidedly variable.

## THE RECORDINGS



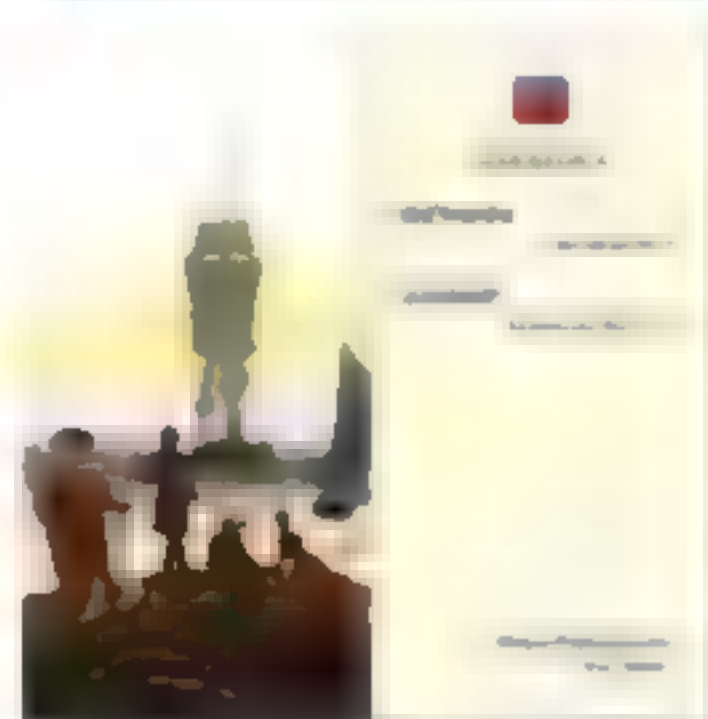
**Haydn** Syms **Brahms** Haydn Vars **Monteux**  
Decca Eloquence © 480 4726

**Brahms** Sym No 3 **Weber** Ovs **Böhm**  
Decca Eloquence © 480 3793

**Beethoven. Schubert** Syms **Böhm**  
Decca Eloquence © 480 3794

**Bartók. Gould. Schoenberg** Wks **Stokowski**  
Pristine Audio © PASC274

**Beethoven** Pf Wks **Richter-Haaser**  
EMI © 6 648309-2



# Mostly Martzy

The artistry of an almost forgotten violinist

**A**mong the happiest of instrumental reissues are two Testament double-packs devoted to the art of violinist **Johanna Martzy**. The first gathers together all of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for unaccompanied violin, in transfers that for the most part focus Martzy's big, vibrant tone with amplitude and clarity. The playing crosses an old-world preference for prominent vibrato (which not all the critics of the day approved of) with a conspicuous absence, for much of the time, of expressive slides. Martzy's playing of chords is unusually smooth and sonorous, her sense of rhythm is impeccable and her playing of the larger movements – the D minor Chaconne and the C major Fugue, for example – exhibits an imposing sense of musical structure. There are alternative radio recordings of the First Sonata and Third Partita but the studio recordings have a finish to them that proves more durable.

The second Martzy double pack features Schubert's complete works for violin and piano, and again displays respect for the printed score and many attractive tonal attributes, especially valuable in the three sonatas (or "sonatinas") that fill the first disc. Martzy's discreet collaborator in all six works is pianist Jean Antonietti and, while it would be idle to claim a partnership equal to Adolf Busch and Rudolf Serkin in the great C major Fantasia (a fact that, needless say, is not lost on

Testament's annotator and Busch biographer Tully Potter), there is something deeply satisfying in enjoying such rounded musicianship just for its own sake. True, there are important rival versions from Arthur Grumiaux with Robert Veyron-Lacroix or Paul Crossley (Philips) and Szymon Goldberg with Radu Lupu (Decca); but Martzy can hold her own, even in their exalted company.

Finally, more Schubert, this time from the **London String Quartet** (reissued by Pristine Audio), passably recorded in 1928 – the String Quintet in a lively, forthright performance, William Primrose by then the quartet's viola player in place of Harry Waldo Warner. The second cellist is Horace Britt. ●

## THE RECORDINGS



**Bach** Vn Sons & Partitas **Martzy**  
Testament (M) ② SBT2 1467

**Schubert** Cpte Wks for Vn & Pf **Martzy, Antonietti**  
Testament (M) ② SBT2 1468

**Schubert** Stg Qnt **London Stg Qt**  
Pristine Audio © PACM071



# Books

Earl Wild's waspish writings

## A Walk on the Wild Side

A Memoir by Virtuoso Pianist Earl Wild

By Earl Wild

The Ivory Classics Foundation, HB, 886pp, \$45.95

ISBN 978-0-5780746-9-6

Includes CD of excerpts of Wild's 90th-birthday Concertgebouw recital, 2005



The size of a house brick, this must be the thickest single volume of a musician's memoirs ever produced, exceeded in length only by the 1100 pages of Arthur Rubinstein's two autobiographies!

It is also the most salacious, provocative, gossipy, frank and uninhibited of any major pianist! And the one with the most exclamation marks...always a worrying sign!

Here, I must declare a slight interest. In 1999 Wild and his longtime partner Michael Rolland Davis approached me to put this autobiography together from a voluminous amount of material, consisting of literal transcripts of interviews, conversations and lectures that Wild had recorded over the previous 30 years. It made compelling reading even in its native state, packed full of anecdotes, eye-popping revelations and thought-provoking, incisive, contentious commentary on music and its practitioners. With no money from any source to continue what had become a labour of love, I had to throw in the towel. Twelve years on and too late, sadly, for its subject to see it published, the Wild-Davis Ivory Classics Foundation has self-financed its production.

*A Walk on the Wild Side* is fashioned from the same (albeit expanded) archive I dealt with. You won't read this book for its prose style. Davis has adroitly copy-and-pasted a narrative from his disparate, discursive sources, keeping his late partner's speaking voice throughout. It is all hugely enjoyable and entertaining if you can ignore the fact that, as his own editor, Davis is too close to the subject. Boy, did he need someone to tell him where to stop and what to cut! Repetitions, contradictions and misattributions, too numerous to catalogue, abound! As do those



wretched exclamation marks! If Earl has said (on tape) "I can't remember if/why/when", then such hesitations are retained! There is even a cringe-making supplement of Earl's scatological and/or puerile "verse" which should have been kept well hidden from public view. Donald Manildi's thoroughly professional discography makes amends.

Neither self-analysis nor self-deprecation is on Wild's radar. Quick to take offence and with an elephant's memory for the smallest slight, he has opinions on every member of the glittering cast of celebrities he encountered during his long career. Few pianists come away completely unscathed (Rachmaninov is one); several, including Mitsuko Uchida and Alfred Brendel (to whom Wild refers mischievously as "Al"), receive a good whipping for reasons that will either make you cheer or throw the book in the bin.

Look beyond the settlings of old scores, the celebrations of long friendships and the lifetime collection of a born raconteur (many stories well past their sell-by date), and you have, almost incidentally, a veritable *vade mecum* on the piano and piano technique. Wild, as you would expect, wears his learning lightly and with a total lack of pretension, and the pages are sprinkled with invaluable tips and insights, appraisals of the repertoire and how (or how not) to perform it.

This will be of real interest and value to pianists and pianophiles. Ultimately, though, the "author" emerges from the 886 pages as some wickedly indiscreet dinner guest who's been there, done it all and got the T-shirt, a waspish old queen with a twinkle in his eye, a great artist in love with the piano – and who really knew how to play it.

Jeremy Nicholas



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# Musical Journeys

Dorchester-on-Thames

Glyndebourne

Elmau

## The Garden of Proserpine breathes again

A 'lost' Vaughan Williams work receives its world premiere at the English Music Festival, reports **Hannah Nepil**



Soprano Julie Irwin performs VW's setting of Swinburne's poem

### Dorchester-on-Thames

**O**n a winding country lane, flanked by two fields, the taxi driver consults his satnav. "We can't be far now," he assures me, with only a flicker of worry. He is right. Within minutes I am bundled out of the car and deposited by a 12th-century abbey, in the heart of the Oxfordshire town of Dorchester-on-Thames.

This is the picturesque setting for May's English Music Festival, now in its fifth year. While the abbey's majestic interior provides the sense of occasion, the village itself looks like a poster for the English countryside. A study in thatched cottages and climbing roses – assets which, I am informed, have found their way into various episodes of *Midsomer Murders* – it certainly lends charm aplenty to the festival.

Not that there isn't an abundance to start with. The annual event, founded by Em Marshall in 2006, more than fulfils its manifesto to champion new, neglected and little-known English works. This year, featured composers range from Capel Bond, Constant Lambert and John Pickard to Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Holst and Britten.


The most eagerly anticipated event is Monday night's world-premiere performance of Vaughan Williams's *The Garden of Proserpine* for soprano, chorus and orchestra, to tie in with the release of its world-premiere recording the following day. Completed in 1899, this setting of the poem by Algernon Swinburne, describing the garden where the dead dwell, was the composer's first attempt at a large-scale work; his previous output had consisted of songs and chamber music. Under the baton of David Hill, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra make a strong case for this long-neglected work. Although it doesn't sound much like the composer's mature pieces – he had not established his interest in folksong when he wrote this – it's full of the inimitable

atmosphere that distinguishes later works such as the *Sea Symphony* and *Toward the Unknown Region*. And it's a sensitive setting of Swinburne's anti-theistic poem, which caused scandal when it was published in 1866.

According to the conductor David Hill, *The Garden of Proserpine* is nevertheless a characteristically positive work. "Vaughan Williams could have set this morbid subject matter in a minor key but instead he opted for F major. That's reflective of his character: he was always an optimist." When I ask Hill why he believes the work was left unperformed for so long, he puts it down to bad luck. "It just got lost. Vaughan Williams forgot about it and so did everybody else."

It is one of several premieres offered by the festival. On Monday morning, violinist Rupert Luck puts his lustrous sound to effective use in a programme including the world premiere of Ivor Gurney's Sonata for Violin and Piano in E flat major and a new edition of Howells's Sonata for Violin and Piano No 2: both works of extraordinary breadth and colour. Contemporary composers also fare well, with performances of Paul Carr's ethereally beautiful Sonatina, Lionel Sainsbury's *Mirage* and John Pickard's brooding *The Burning of the Leaves*.

There are also memorable performances of music by 20th-century composers whose names have unaccountably fallen into obscurity, such as Norman O'Neill's Piano Quintet, but best of all is Constant Lambert's Concerto for Piano and Nine Instruments. This little-known piece firmly demonstrates Lambert's mastery of "symphonic jazz" – a term coined by the composer himself. It's a furious, red-blooded work, one that benefits from pianist David Owen Norris's high-octane approach.

Unsurprisingly, in a four-day event, there's only so much that can be done. Nevertheless, at a time when much English music can be somewhat sidelined in its own country, it's refreshing to find a festival so committed to embracing it. 



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 Anthony Marwood violin  
 Markus Maskunitty french horn  
 Priya Mitchell violin  
 Alexei Ogrintchouk oboe  
 Jean-Guihen Queyras cello  
 Lars Anders Tomter viola  
 Apollon Musagete Quartet  
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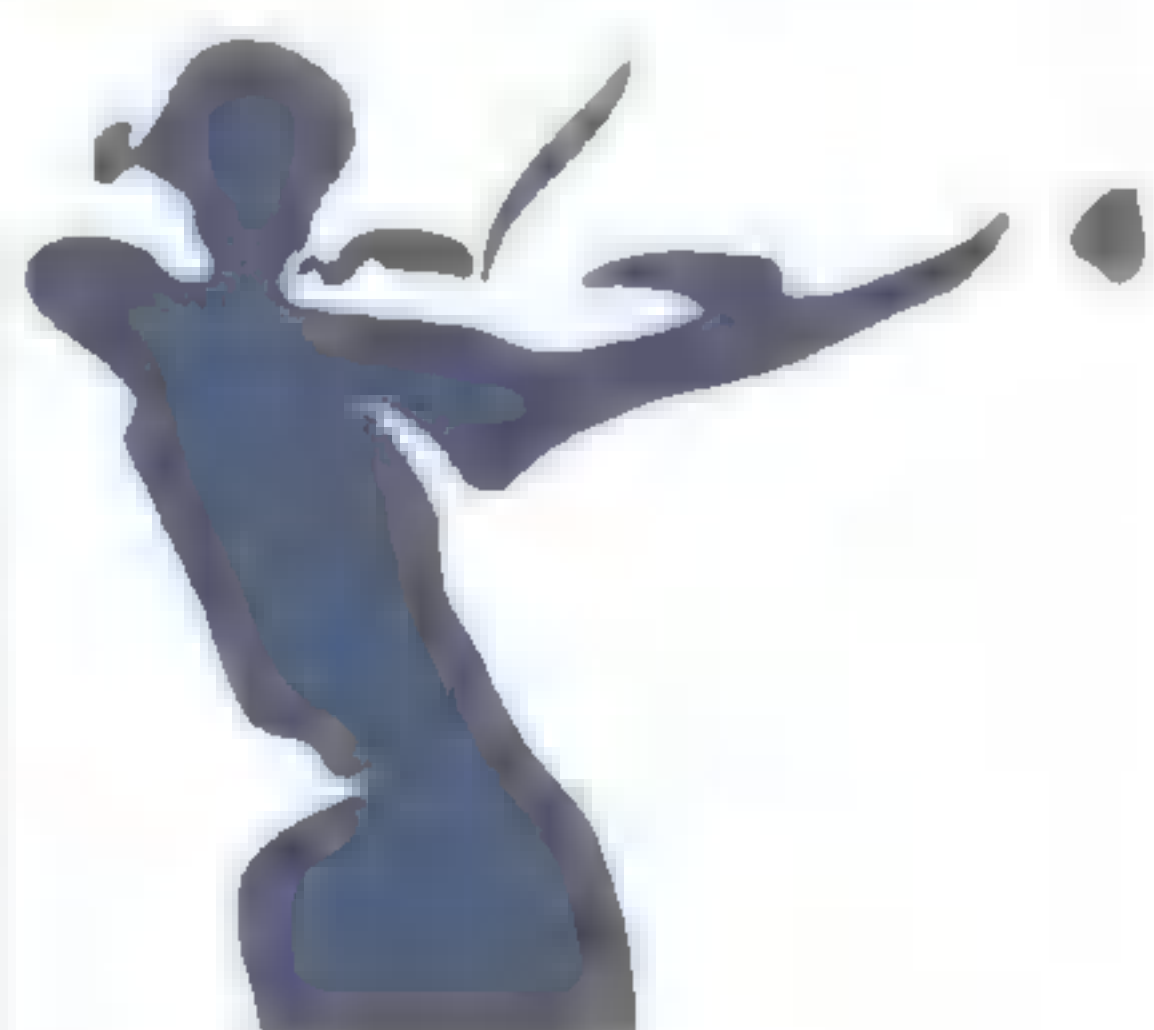
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## MUSICAL JOURNEYS

Gerald Finley's Sachs:  
 centre stage at  
 Glyndebourne



Gerald Finley's debut as Hans Sachs defies convention, finds **James Inverne**

### Glyndebourne

Gerald Finley's first Hans Sachs is a mess. Not in terms of the Canadian bass-baritone's performance, to be sure. But as a character, nothing could be further from the age-old image of Wagner's musical cobbler as a genial sage than the haunted, mercurial figure presented by David McVicar's new production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at the Glyndebourne Festival.

Staging *Meistersinger* at Glyndebourne was a dream, belatedly now realised, for its founder John Christie. Aside from its reinvention of Sachs though, McVicar's pretty traditional production won't trouble the horses (or sheep).

Like so many artistic souls, Sachs's here is tortured. Some of this is there in the libretto, notably his wife's death (Finley almost physically flinches every time she is mentioned and keeps her portrait covered). But Finley and McVicar go further. This mastersinger not only recognises Walther's genius, he actually cannot handle it. Whether because of latent jealousy, the sheer intensity of being made to re-examine his own art, or his own love for Eva, Finley rages as much as he comforts, he sabotages (almost) as much as he guides. He drinks himself into a stupor. When he says that Walther

should be being hounded out of town, he half means it.

All of which plays to Finley's strengths. The voice is more slimline than the role demands, but the small house covers that fact. And by not going for the rolling-tone approach, Finley can stick to what he's good at. Specificity, above all. He has the Lieder singer's ability to strip away the non-essentials and convey the precise meaning of a thought (for a Sachs this changeable he needed to). Movement as well was everywhere made to tell, whether the furious kick of a stool or, unforgettably, his reaction upon first hearing Walther sing – pen poised to take notes, it hovered above the paper until, almost imperceptibly, its owner sat back open-mouthed, the chair rocking back slightly. Then back to the notepad and the scribbling came thick and fast.

Not, unfortunately, that Marco Jentzsch's limited Walther really merited such admiration. Finley aside it was the genuinely offended Beckmesser of Johannes Martin Kränzle who most impressed (he did a killer Finley impression). Alistair Miles was a solid Pogner. Anna Gabler is wrong for Eva. Not her fault, but Eva needs luminosity and warmth and Gabler's cool soprano had neither of those. Both came from the pit, where Vladimir Jurowski and the London Philharmonic channelled lightning. ©





Elmau

Elmau has always had a strong cultural tradition. Since 1952 it has hosted a music festival (that year featured Elly Ney and Wilhelm Kempff). The first of its chamber music festivals (Britten, Pears, Gilels, Bream, Menuhin – not a bad line-up) was in 1957.

Dietmar Müller-Elmau, the present owner and grandson of the Schloss's founder, oversaw the rebuilding of much of the building after a fire in 2005. It is his vision that created the remarkable unified visual and spiritual aesthetics of the place. If you want nightclubs and supermarkets, stay away, but for pampering with some world-class musicians thrown in, it doesn't get better than this. Oh – and the jazz pianist in the bar is sensational. 🍷



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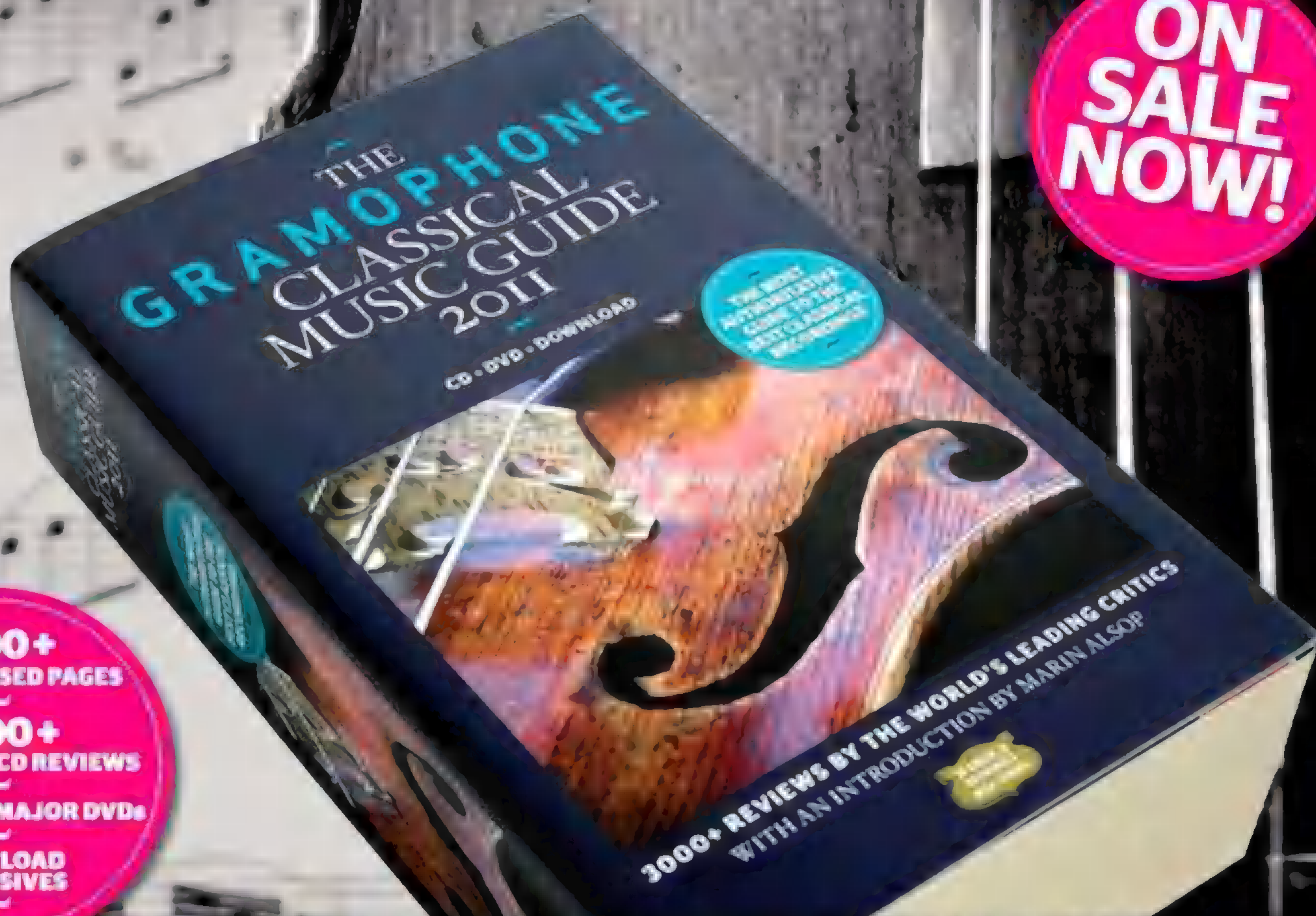
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## London Riverside Studios

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival runs from August 4 to 21 with more than 30 new commissions from

Glyndebourne Youth Opera, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Youth Opera and Opera North, as well as a plethora of fringe events.

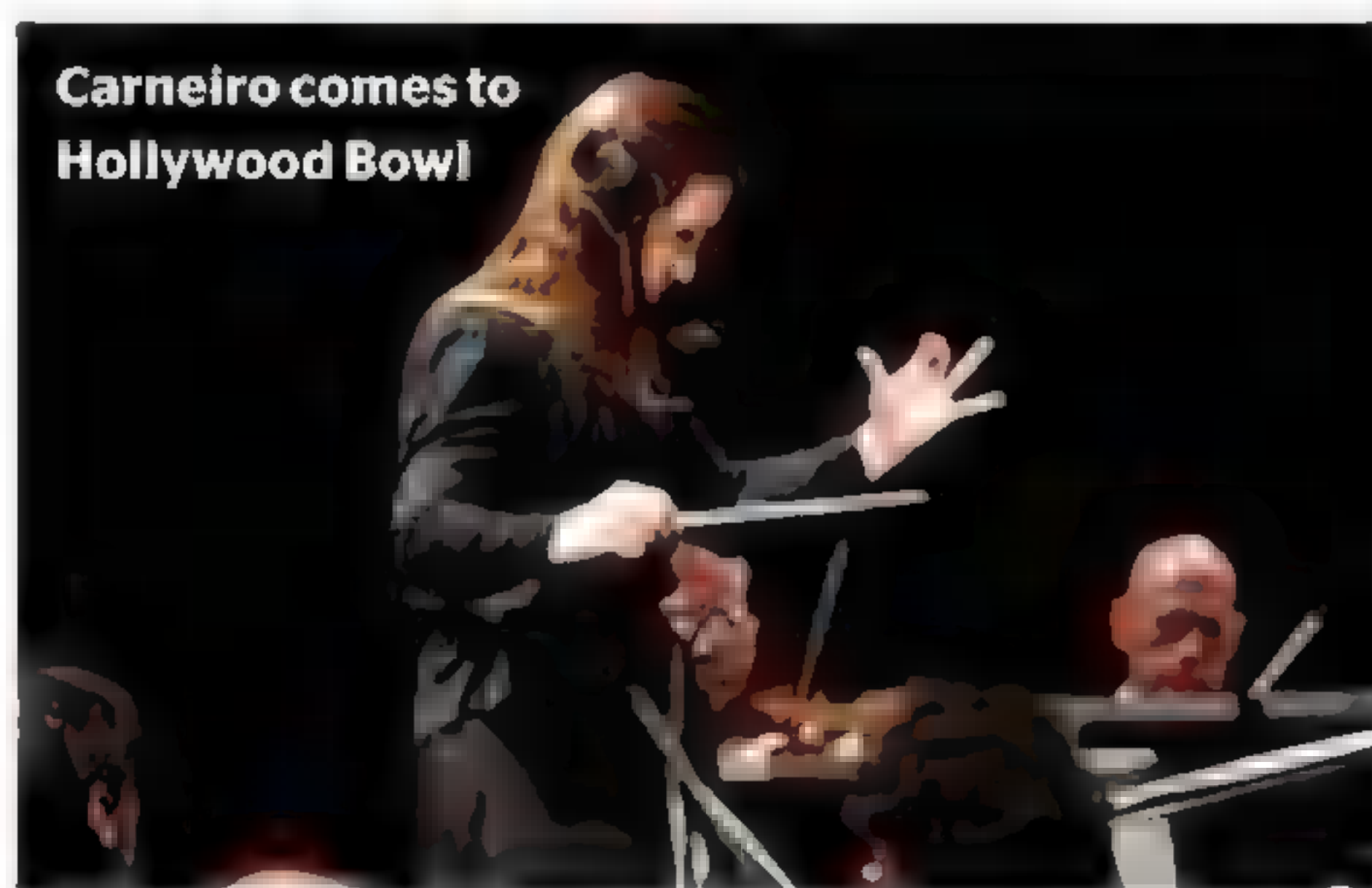
Details: [www.tete-a-tete.org.uk](http://www.tete-a-tete.org.uk)

**04**  
August

## Hollywood Bowl

Joana Carneiro conducts the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Nielsen's *Maskarade* Overture,

Copland's *Appalachian Spring* Suite, and clarinet concertos by Lindberg and Copland featuring soloist Paul Meyer. Details: +1 323 850 2000 / [www.hollywoodbowl.com](http://www.hollywoodbowl.com)



Carneiro comes to Hollywood Bowl

**04**  
August

## Singapore Esplanade

The Singapore Symphony, conducted by Lan Shui, perform Prokofiev's Symphony No 1,

*Classical*, Goldmark's Symphony No 2 and Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with piano soloist Yevgeny Sudbin.

Details: +65 6348 5555 / [www.sso.org.sg](http://www.sso.org.sg)

**05**  
August

## Gateshead The Sage

The final concert in the Northern Sinfonia's Summer Chamber Music series includes

Mozart's sunny String Quartet No 19, *Dissonant*, Schoenberg's Quintet for Winds, Op 26, and Schubert's glorious Quintet in C. Details: +44 (0)191 443 4661 /

[www.thesagegateshead.org](http://www.thesagegateshead.org)

**05**  
August

## Vienna St Stephen's Cathedral

Soloists from the Vienna Chamber Orchestra perform a selection of sacred music as part of their

Summer and Advent concert series in support of the historic 12th-century St Stephen's Cathedral. Details: +43 1 203 63 57 / [www.kammerorchester.com](http://www.kammerorchester.com)

**05**  
August

## Bournemouth Meyrick Park

The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conducted by Kirill Karabits perform a Russian Festival

including works by Borodin, Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Prokofiev and Khachaturian. Details:

+44 (0)1202 669925 / [www.bsolive.com](http://www.bsolive.com)

**13**  
August

## Northamptonshire Althorp Park

The New English Concert Orchestra conducted by Douglas Coombes team with soprano

Denise Leigh in a programme of classical favourites at The Battle Proms, which also includes cavalry displays and fireworks. Details: +44 (0)1432 355416 / [www.battleproms.com](http://www.battleproms.com)

**14**  
August

## Santa Fe

Lensic Performing Arts Center

Violinist and cellist Benny and Eric Kim, and pianists Shai Wosner and Joyce Yang, join the Orion Quartet to perform a chamber programme of Beethoven, Haydn, Barber and Tchaikovsky as part of the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival.

Details: +1 505 982 1890 / [www.sfcmf.org](http://www.sfcmf.org)

**19**  
August

## Helsinki Festival

The 2011 Helsinki Festival runs from August 18 to September 4 with performances from the Artemis

Quartet, Steven Isserlis and Olli Mustonen, the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ingo Metzmacher, Yundi, and Jordi Savall, plus a wealth of other events. Details: +358 600 10 800 / [www.helsinginjuhlaviikot.fi](http://www.helsinginjuhlaviikot.fi)

**22**  
August

## Dresden Semperoper

Sir Colin Davis conducts the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester in Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three*

*Movements*, Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 4 and Ravel's *Shéhérazade* with mezzo Susan Graham. Details: +49 351 49 11 705 / [www.staatskapelle-dresden.de](http://www.staatskapelle-dresden.de)

**24**  
August

## Sydney Opera House

Opera Australia presents Delibes's *Lakmé*

conducted by Emmanuel Joel-Hornak with Emma Matthews in the title-role on August 24, 27 and 31, and September 3, 9, 13,

17 and 21. Details: + 61 2 9318 8200 /

[www.opera-australia.org.au](http://www.opera-australia.org.au)

**27**  
August

## Milwaukee Marcus Center

New music ensemble Present Music give a concert in collaboration with Milwaukee Choral Artists and

Vocal Arts Academy of Milwaukee, including a world premiere by Turkish composer Kamran Ince. Details: +1 414 273 7206 /

[www.presentmusic.org](http://www.presentmusic.org)

**27**  
August

## Hamburg Laeiszhalle

Anne-Sophie Mutter joins the Pittsburgh Symphony and music director Manfred Honeck to

perform Rihm's Violin Concerto, *Lichtes Spiel*, and Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto alongside Mahler's Symphony No 5 as part of the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival.

Details: + 49 431 23 7070 / [www.shmf.de](http://www.shmf.de)

**27**  
August

## Copenhagen Music Theatre

Nordic Early Opera presents a new production of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* conducted

by Benjamin Bayl on August 27, 29 and 31, and September 2 and 6. Details: +45 3332 5556 / [www.kobenhavnsmusikteater.dk](http://www.kobenhavnsmusikteater.dk)

**27**  
August

## Toronto Rexall Centre

Lorin Maazel conducts the London Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven's *Leonore* Overture No 3

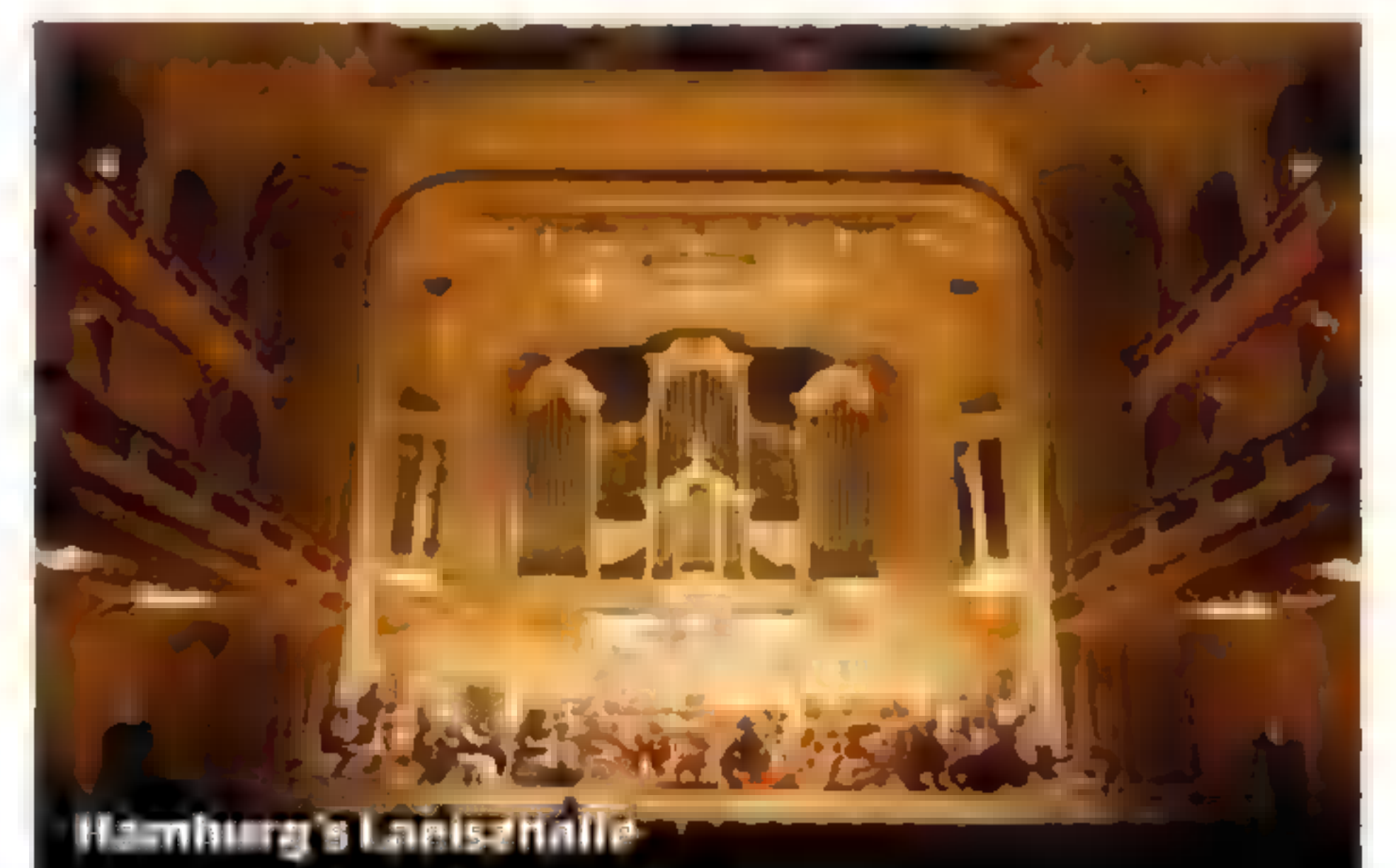
and Symphony No 9, *Choral*, with soloists Adrienne Pieczonka, Ekaterina Metlova, Richard Margison, René Pape, plus the Black Creek Festival Chorus. Details: +1 888 860 7888 / [www.blackcreekfestival.com](http://www.blackcreekfestival.com)

**29**  
August

## Dublin National Concert Hall

Charles Dutoit conducts the Philadelphia Orchestra in Sibelius's *Finlandia*, Rachmaninov's *Symphonic*

*Dances*, Ravel's *La valse* and Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with soloist Janine Jansen. Details: +353 1 417 0000 / [www.nch.ie](http://www.nch.ie)



Hamburg's Laeiszhalle



# High Fidelity

**News and reviews** of the latest in audio, home cinema and new technology

## Audio's high end is moving with the times



The High End Show isn't just the most important event of its kind in Europe – it may be the world's best showcase for specialist audio and home cinema equipment, says **Andrew Everard**

Sometimes the German High End Society's High End Show, held annually in Munich, appears to approach the big motor shows in the importance placed on concept products, many of which will either never be sold or will be available in tiny "to order" quantities with eye-watering prices. For example, in 2009 KEF showed its Concept Blade loudspeakers, at the time a demonstration of the way it was thinking about significant parts of speaker designs.

At this year's show, however, the company confounded expectation with a first-day announcement that the speakers are not just to go on sale, as part of the company's 50th anniversary celebrations, but will do so in a dazzling array of custom colours including Racing Red and Orange, Lemon or Lime Sorbet. The price will be around £20,000 a pair and the speakers will be on sale in the next month or two.

And just as the news of the availability of the KEF speakers was rather newer than the speakers themselves, Cambridge Audio announced that its NP30 streaming client is about to hit the shops. But despite the signs

on the product declaring it to be "Neu", the NP30 was one of the talking points of High End Show 2010, since when its launch got delayed by some glitches and improvements.

Definitely new, albeit still something of a concept product, was the Boston Acoustics "aXperience" loudspeaker, being demonstrated on the end of a complete Marantz system, the two now being part of D&M Holdings. The striking white floorstanding speakers, with their side-firing bass unit, and midrange drivers and tweeter on a decoupled panel in the centre of the baffle, have been designed by Marantz brand ambassador Ken Ishiwata and consultant Karl-Heinz Fink, fresh from their work on revamping some of the company's mainstream speakers. While Ishiwata's name will be familiar to many, Fink's may be less so. To put it simply, let's just say his work is behind a surprising number of speakers currently on the market, from mass-market brands to some very specialist manufacturers.

So, are the speakers a production model or a concept? Says Ishiwata, "Oh, we'll make you a pair if you want them – but you'll need around €20,000..." Not so far away I was also

taken with the little Dali Fazon F5 speakers, priced at €1499 apiece, in line with common European practice of pricing speakers singly. Standing just 92cm tall, with an elegantly curvaceous cast aluminium enclosure available in a choice of colours, these stylish speakers not only sounded excellent but looked superb, too.

And while there's no shortage of loudspeakers ready to grab the attention at the High End Show, not all of them do so for the right reason. Fans of the huge and the wild always find themselves in some kind of speaker nirvana at this show but not so many of us could imagine actually having some of the more outrageous designs in our rooms.

Take, for example, the massive modular speakers made by Japanese company Audio Tekne, combining the looks of some kind of heating appliance with a sound that just about hangs together in the demonstration room, or the giant white sculpture that is the Musique

*'Some speakers look like giant heating appliances and bass horns into which a small child could vanish'*

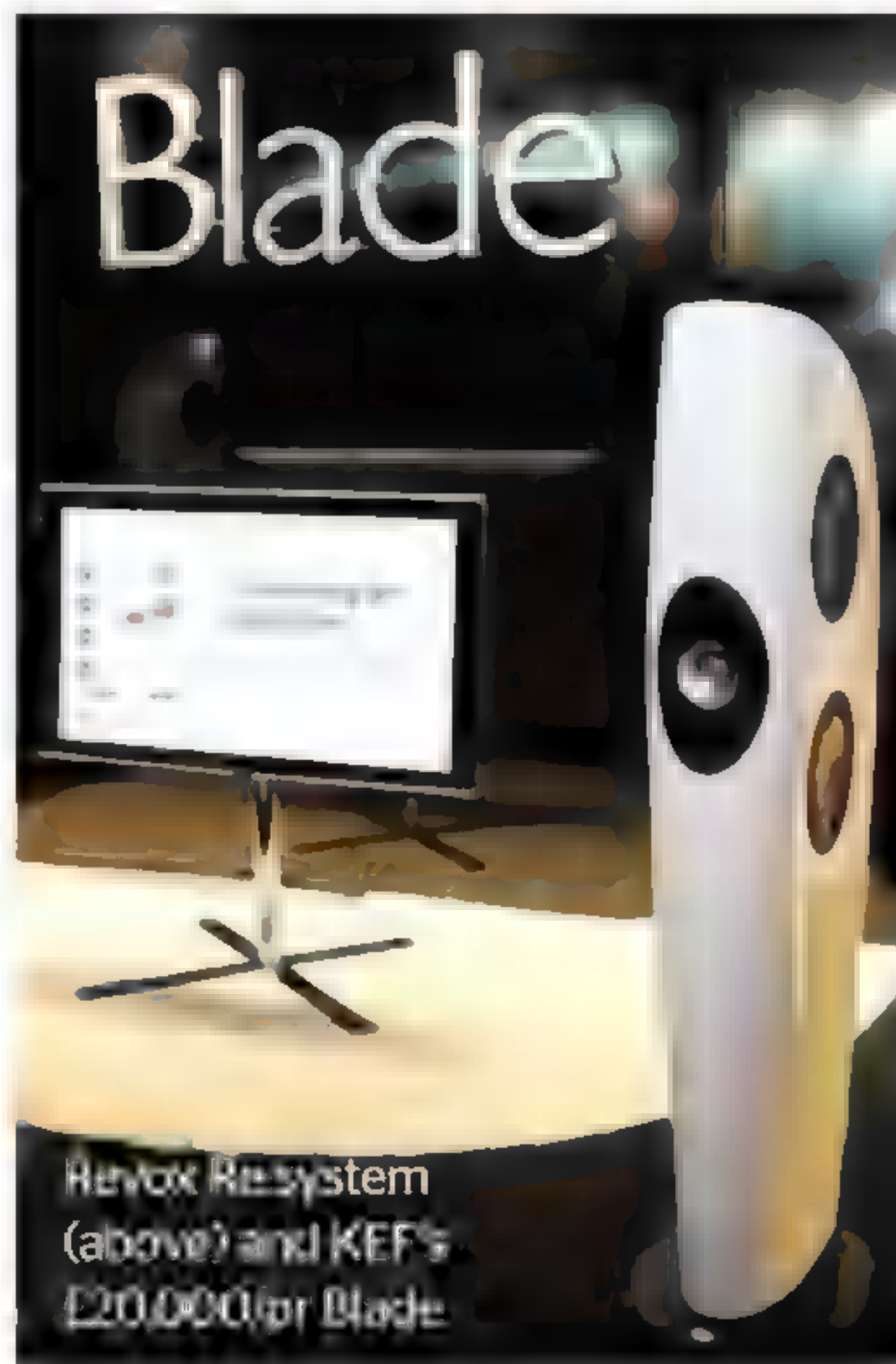
Concrete Grande Castine, with a bass horn into which a small child could vanish.

Totally and utterly non-room-friendly were the products shown by Silbatone, which manufactures valve amps. This year it was making waves with a massive speaker array built around a 1929 Western Electric 16A bass horn, which was widely acknowledged as one of the show highlights.

Much more sensible was the debut of the Ultimatum XLi speakers from British company Neat Acoustics: these high-quality floorstanders, complete with isobaric bass units and upward-firing supertweeters, will be covered in more detail in the coming months, and a review pair has already been requested.

It's always interesting to see which new brands IAG has added to its stable at each show: the company behind Audiolab, Castle,





Mission, Quad and Wharfedale has added Ekco and Leak to the list on its billboard but my attention was caught by its line-up of Luxman equipment.

Most intriguing was the company's NeoClassico pairing of compact D-N10 CD player and SQ-N10 tube amplifier, available with an add-on digital iPod dock and some suitably retro-looking speakers. It's a very slick little system and seems beautifully built – and that can also be said of the Chinese-made Shanling electronics on show elsewhere.

Shanling was showing a standalone digital-to-analogue converter – but then so was just about every company, with music server systems seemingly springing up wherever one looked. Chinese company Opera-Consonance, the manufacturer of the splendidly named Ping system, has a streaming player, the Linear 7, and the Linear 8 Wi-Fi-equipped digital-to-analogue converter, both controllable via the inevitable iPhone/iPad app.

Other streaming components ranged from the hefty Burmester 111 server and an upmarket music storage system from

Weiss Audio to simpler client systems from Revox and a revived Telefunken. The Revox range is built around its Re:system modular concept, on to which can be attached a range of storage and streaming modules to expand functionality, while Telefunken was showing a neat little Wi-Fi micro system.

Meanwhile, NAD looks like becoming the latest mainstream audio company to join the streaming trend: its C446BEE, set to sell for €799, combines network music client, radio tuner and USB/iPod/iPhone connectivity.

Before leaving the show, just one more question: why was there a London taxi parked in one atrium, just outside the Adam Audio showroom? The answer was that this was no ordinary taxi but a RemoteTaxi: a complete recording control room built into the back of a cab and using Adam nearfield speakers.

It's no gimmick but rather one of a fleet of highly mobile recording solutions being offered worldwide by the company, and already in use for stereo and surround recordings on location, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and vocalist Sting, recorded live in Berlin. ©

# Infidelities Andrew Everard

## High end for all: audio shown at its best

Spend even a short time at the High End Show, held annually in Munich, and you'll find fellow visitors from the UK asking you the same question: why don't we have anything like it in Britain?

There's a whole series of reasons, not least of which is the fact that the show has an organiser whose operations are dedicated to the promotion of high-end audio, rather than relying on a retailer or publisher to run it. The High End Society, under the firm guidance of managing director Branko Glisovic, has been operating since 1981, with the avowed intention of keeping specialist audio equipment in the public eye.

The show started in a Düsseldorf hotel as a purist audio reaction to the country's pre-existing consumer electronics show becoming more focused on video products, moved to Frankfurt, and of late has settled in Munich, where it provides a showcase for everyone from small companies making a start in the business to the established names from Germany and far beyond.

In the many years I've been visiting the show, I've seen it become ever more international and the range of visitors attending ever more diverse. Manufacturers and journalists from all over the world attend to see new products launched and it's not unknown for a new arrival to be surrounded by a small knot of visitors from China, say, or Taiwan, usually with one or two creating a diversion while the others examine, note and photograph the item from every conceivable angle!

Whether for manufacturers, the press or consumers, this is now firmly established as *the* European show to attend.

**Andrew Everard**  
Audio Editor

'The  
organiser's  
intention is to  
keep audio in  
the public eye'





## The Music Chain

Much is written about music and the musicians who entertain us, and we rightly exalt great musicians. But there is an interlinked chain of participants, two of which are I believe are crucial to our music scene in today's world. For centuries the music chain was a very short one – composers or songwriters, musicians and listeners, and the judgement on quality was immediate. Recording technologies have changed all this exponentially.

Today, we listen to most of our music from a recording and this gives recording engineers the opportunity to avoid poor acoustics, duff notes and off days. This, of course, means the chain has grown to include the recording engineers, the music distribution system (retailers or downloads), hi-fi manufacturers, hi-fi sellers and the hi-fi purchasers, the latter being the listeners. I should start by saying that hi-fi has become an adulterated term that no longer has its original meaning because it's applied to much equipment that certainly should not be termed high-fidelity.

It's said that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. However, I believe there are two particularly strong links that, if removed from the chain, would seriously damage the quality of recorded music. These are the audiophile, or hi-fi connoisseur, and the specialist hi-fi retailer, the latter in nearly all cases also being the former because it's their interest that has driven them into their particular business. These are the people who most appreciate how exciting and involving music can be and how it can deliver an emotional experience.

### Hi-Fi Connoisseurs

So why is the hi-fi connoisseur so important to the music industry? By their nature, audiophiles are generally avid music lovers who enhance their enjoyment through listening to music at its very best quality level, which means playing great recordings through hi-end hi-fi to achieve the most outstanding results. Without the audiophile, the main driver for quality would probably be removed from the chain. Let's be honest, over recent years the majority of music

listeners now settle for MP3 convenience and, therefore, mediocre sound quality. If the pendulum ever swings so far that all but a few listen to highly compressed formats such as MP3, music producers will not waste their resources on producing high quality recordings because it would be commercially unnecessary, even if their recording engineers wanted to achieve the best they could. After all, an MP3 or AAC file, the iTunes default format, downloaded at 128 kbps (the most popular download speed), is about one-eleventh the size of a full resolution CD track, 1411 kbps, so the quality is inevitably far inferior. Information is irretrievably lost and the full dynamic range is lacking. Using an iPod while jogging does not really raise a quality issue but playing low-resolution tracks through an iPod docking station that feeds into a decent hi-fi system, is a disaster area. It's rubbish quality made louder. Fortunately, there is still significant demand from audiophiles committed to sound quality to sustain the production of high quality recordings, but it would be a tragedy if there weren't. For example, most classical

# THE TOP 20



recordings downloaded as an MP3 or AAC file are a complete waste of time because there is so much information missing that they are reduced to just the essence of a tune.

### Specialist Hi-Fi Retailers

Just as essential a link in the chain as the hi-fi connoisseur is the specialist hi-fi retailer and the two are rightly dependent on each other. Without the specialist retailer the hi-end hi-fi manufacturer would have to rely on the internet and hi-fi magazine reviewers to try and assess the relative merits and performance of their products against that of their competitors – a notoriously unreliable decision making process. Specialist hi-fi retailers are constantly being offered new products for assessment and potential stocking and, as it is also their hobby as well as their livelihood, they are greatly interested in achieving the best performance and seeking out the most outstanding products and combinations. More than that though is their relationship with audiophiles for, if they are to stay in business, they must satisfy the most discerning customers in the industry. The reality is that audiophiles and specialist hi-fi retailers are essential to each other.



## Future of Recorded Music

What are the future prospects of maintaining high quality music recordings? We must hope that audiophiles, or hi-fi connoisseurs, or perhaps most accurately described, music lovers, will continue to drive the demand for quality. But another important reason for hope within the mass-market is that there is no longer any over-riding reason for MP3 and AAC to have such a following. These formats were designed to overcome very slow download speeds and expensive memory capacity. These are not significant factors for most people now. Full resolution, CD quality, downloads are already available and should become the norm as long as the general public can be made aware of the tremendous quality benefit. This has happened with HD TV so we know this awareness can grow rapidly. In the meantime, we must highly value hi-fi connoisseurs and specialist hi-fi retailers, of which the ones listed on this page represent the UK's finest. Specialist dealers know how to choose the products that combine as a superb system and how to get the best out of it by expert installation in the home.

If there's a price premium over an internet purchase, it's probably a small one, but it's unquestionably worth the difference.

## STAR QUALITIES

VALUE FOR MONEY ..... ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
 SERVICE ..... ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
 FACILITIES ..... ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
 VERDICT ..... ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



The dealers below have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

# GUIDE

## TO BUYING A HI-FI SYSTEM

### OUR TOP 20 UK HI-FI DEALERS

#### Ashford, Kent

**SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI**  
 40 High Street.  
 t: 01233 624441  
[www.soundcraft-hifi.com](http://www.soundcraft-hifi.com)

#### Chelmsford RAYLEIGH HI-FI

216 Moulsham Street.  
 t: 01245 265245  
[www.rayleigh-hifi.com](http://www.rayleigh-hifi.com)

#### Colchester RAYLEIGH HI-FI

33 Sir Isaac's Walk.  
 t: 01206 577682  
[www.rayleigh-hifi.com](http://www.rayleigh-hifi.com)

#### Kingston-upon-Thames INFIDELITY

9 High Street,  
 Hampton Wick.  
 t: 020 8943 3530  
[www.infidelity.co.uk](http://www.infidelity.co.uk)

#### Maidenhead

**AUDIO VENUE**  
 36 Queen Street.  
 t: 01628 633995  
[www.audiovenue.com](http://www.audiovenue.com)

#### Rayleigh, Essex

**RAYLEIGH HI-FI**  
 44a High Street.  
 t: 01268 779762  
[www.rayleigh-hifi.com](http://www.rayleigh-hifi.com)

#### Southend-on-Sea

**RAYLEIGH HI-FI**  
 132/4 London Road.  
 t: 01702 435255  
[www.rayleigh-hifi.com](http://www.rayleigh-hifi.com)

#### Ealing AUDIO VENUE

27 Bond Street.  
 t: 020 8567 8703  
[www.audiovenue.com](http://www.audiovenue.com)

#### N1 GRAHAMS HI-FI

190a New North Road.  
 t: 020 7226 5500  
[www.grahams.co.uk](http://www.grahams.co.uk)

#### SW11 ORANGES & LEMONS

61/63 Webbs Road.  
 t: 020 7924 2043  
[www.oandlhifi.co.uk](http://www.oandlhifi.co.uk)

#### SOUTH-WEST

**Bath AUDIENCE**  
 14 Broad Street.  
 t: 01225 333310  
[www.audience.org.uk](http://www.audience.org.uk)

#### Exeter GULLIFORD HI-FI

97 Sidwell Street.  
 t: 01392 491194  
[www.gulliford-hifi.co.uk](http://www.gulliford-hifi.co.uk)

#### Banbury OVERTURE

3 Church Lane.  
 t: 01295 272158  
[www.overture.co.uk](http://www.overture.co.uk)

#### Birmingham

**MUSIC MATTERS**  
 363 Hagley Road,  
 Edgbaston.  
 t: 0121 429 2811  
[www.musicmatters.co.uk](http://www.musicmatters.co.uk)

#### Coventry FRANK HARVEY

163 Spon Street.  
 t: 024 7652 5200  
[www.frankharvey.co.uk](http://www.frankharvey.co.uk)

#### Leicester CYMBIOSIS

6 Hotel Street.  
 t: 0116 262 3754  
[www.cymbiosis.com](http://www.cymbiosis.com)

#### Nottingham

**CASTLE SOUND & VISION**  
 48/50 Maid Marian Way.  
 t: 0115 9584404  
[www.castlesoundvision.com](http://www.castlesoundvision.com)

#### Cheadle

**THE AUDIO WORKS**  
 14 Stockport Road.  
 t: 0161 428 7887  
[www.theaudioworks.co.uk](http://www.theaudioworks.co.uk)

#### Chester ACOUSTICA

17 Hoole Road.  
 t: 01244 344227  
[www.acoustica.co.uk](http://www.acoustica.co.uk)

#### Hull THE AUDIO ROOM

2 George Street, Hedon  
 t: 01482 891375  
[www.theaudiroom.co.uk](http://www.theaudiroom.co.uk)

#### York

**SOUND ORGANISATION**  
 2 Gillygate.  
 t: 01904 627108  
[www.soundorg.co.uk](http://www.soundorg.co.uk)

#### Aberdeen HOLBURN HI-FI

441 Holburn Street.  
 t: 01224 585713/  
 572729  
[www.holburnhifi.co.uk](http://www.holburnhifi.co.uk)

#### Edinburgh LOUD & CLEAR

Bonnington Mill,  
 72 Newhaven Road.  
 t: 0131 555 3963  
[www.loud-clear.co.uk](http://www.loud-clear.co.uk)

#### Glasgow LOUD & CLEAR

520 St Vincent Street.  
 t: 0141 221 0221  
[www.loud-clear.co.uk](http://www.loud-clear.co.uk)

#### Glasgow GLASGOW AUDIO

135 Great Western Rd.  
 t: 0141 332 2200/4707  
[www.glasgowaudio.com](http://www.glasgowaudio.com)



## ONKYO TX-NR609

# An affordable AV receiver with real appeal to the music listener

It handles 3D and surround but network audio makes this Onkyo attractive for music too, says **Andrew Everard**

One of audio's great myths is that receivers designed to deliver surround sound are pretty poor when it comes to playing music in stereo. Admittedly in the past this was true in many cases, and of course the inclusion of all the other stuff required by an AV receiver does have an effect on the amount of budget available for the designers to spend on the "pure audio" stuff. Add to that the fact that all those extra sections – and in particular video processing – are fairly noisy (in the electrical sense), and you can see the origins of the myth, which has grown in stature to the point where some would advise you to avoid anything multichannel if you're at all interested in the quality of music reproduction.

There are several layers of "yes but" in response to that, not least of which is the obvious one that of course you need to pay a bit more if you're to get good audio quality from an AV receiver – after all, look at all the extra things it does. Oh, and it's worth adding that increasing amounts of classical music actually come in surround format, whether on DVD, SACD or Blu-ray. It makes a lot of sense to at least consider a multichannel amplifier for music listening, even if you won't use all its capabilities all of the time.

What's more, the quality of audio available from the modern crop of surround-sound receivers is, in many cases, better than that on offer from earlier examples of the breed. Greater integration of the components needed to handle all that video and surround

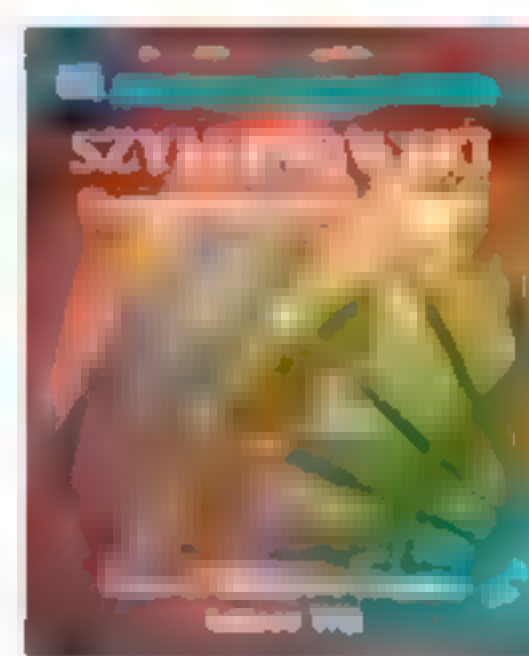
processing has made it simpler and less expensive to implement, and manufacturers have realised that few of us have the luxury of separate rooms for music and home cinema use: we need to buy one product to suit all needs.

The Onkyo TX-NR609 sells for £500 and offers all the current home cinema must-haves, including 3D video pass-through from a suitable player or set-top box to a 3D-capable TV, decoding for all the current "HD" audio formats, THX Select2 certification and a generous range of inputs and outputs, both audio and visual.

However, it also has facilities not so long ago reserved for top-end products, not least of which is network audio capability – the ability to play music over a home network from computers or network storage devices, or stream internet radio stations. It can even access paid-for music-streaming services such as Last.fm, Napster and Spotify (subject to availability and subscription), the connection being via wired Ethernet as standard, with a wireless "dongle" adapter available as an option. And if all that wasn't enough, you can also play music through it from USB memory devices or make a direct digital connection via the front-panel USB to iPods, iPhones and iPads for music playback.

On the audio front alone, that makes the Onkyo extremely interesting: the "how does it compare with a basic stereo amplifier?"

## THE TEST MUSIC



## SZYMANOWSKI

Symphonies Nos 1 and 2  
Warsaw PO / Antoni Wit  
Naxos (M) NBD0021

A bold DTS-HD 5.1 presentation with atmosphere and power, allowing the Onkyo to show what it can do.



question becomes irrelevant, simply because I don't know of any audio-only amplifiers at this kind of price offering so much in the computer-stored music department.

To a great extent it's a trick missed by the majority of hi-fi manufacturers: with the exception of a few all-in-one systems, there's not much available in the pure stereo streaming amplifier solution market until you get to the likes of the new Cyrus Streamline and Naim's UnitiQute. This sector of the market has been largely left for surround receivers to fill.

## PERFORMANCE

Along with Onkyo's well-developed Wide Range Amplifier Technology and a hefty power-supply section, with a large transformer designed to deliver generous amounts of current, the TX-NR609 has a healthy output – although not the 160W per channel claimed, using very lenient parameters; the 100W figure at 0.08 per cent distortion, and across a frequency range of 20Hz-20kHz, is more indicative. In addition, a Direct mode bypasses

## THE FUTURE OF HI-FI

### NDX Network Player

Combining cutting-edge technology with audiophile sound quality, the NDX is the next generation of hi-fi.

This versatile digital player has three S/PDIF digital inputs, can play UPnP audio streams, Internet radio, USB-stored audio and allows playback from Apple devices.



Find out more about Naim's digital players at [www.naimaudio.com/on\\_stream](http://www.naimaudio.com/on_stream)





all the audio processing and plays audio in its native form, while a further Pure Audio mode will turn off both the video processing and the display – either of which can, as mentioned above, be a source of electrical noise.

Finally, for those lucky to have a universal player able to play SACD discs, or even a dedicated SACD machine, the Onkyo can take the format's core DSD directly over an HDMI connection for multichannel sound or, if your player doesn't have a suitable HDMI output, can also be connected via conventional stereo analogue cables.

It may seem strange to review a product such as this and all but ignore its home cinema capabilities but I really wanted to hear what it could do in stereo, even though I did try it for a day or two with a selection of concert and opera DVD and Blu-ray titles, and found it slotted in well in place of my current, and now rather well-used, receiver.

However, it the performance in stereo came as a welcome and pleasant surprise: the Onkyo is a very long way from the old "crash and bang" stereotype of multichannel amplifiers. It has a poise and smoothness that wouldn't go amiss in a much more simply equipped stereo amplifier at this kind of price, with a firm grip on the music giving it a clean, dynamic sound without any excessive sting in the treble or boom in the bass. It's worth spending time experimenting with the huge range of adjustments available if you want to make use of all the processing on offer but in Pure Audio mode, with as much turned off as possible, it sounds as good as any receiver I've encountered this side of a four-figure price-tag.

Operation of the receiver, whether with conventional sources or streaming content, is simple and smooth, helped no end by the availability of a free iPod/iPhone/iPad control app, which accesses the receiver over the home network. This isn't quite as intuitive as some apps of its kind – too many pages, rather than smooth scrolls

through long lists of artists or titles, for example – but it works well.

But there is a hitch with the Onkyo, and while it's not uncommon in receivers of this kind, it could be a deal-breaker for some buyers. Where a work has a section split across several tracks – an act of an opera, for example – there's a gap in the music of a couple of seconds at the track-change. That could be very annoying for some listeners – to get round it you have to edit your music into a single long track per act or whatever – but to be fair to the Onkyo, very few streaming clients of this kind do offer fully gapless playback.

It's a bit of a fly in the ointment, that one, but if it doesn't have you recoiling in horror, the TX-NR609 has much to commend it. This is an exceptionally flexible and capable component for the money, and well worth a serious audition. **G**

## ONKYO TX-NR609

**Type** Network capable multichannel receiver

**Price** £500

**Principal audio formats handled** Dolby Digital/TruHD/Pro-Logic IIz, DTS-HD Master Audio/Neo6; stereo, multichannel DSD and LPCM, MP3, WMA/ WMA Lossless, AAC, Ogg Vorbis, FLAC

**Power output** 7x100W

**HDMI connections** 5 inputs, 1 output

**Audio inputs** 6 line, 2 optical digital, 2 electrical digital

**Audio outputs** 7 speakers, Zone 2 speakers/ pre-outs, 2 subwoofer pre-outs, tape, headphones

**Video inputs** 2 component, 4 composite video

**Video outputs** component and composite monitor output

**Other connections** FM/AM antenna inputs, Ethernet port, USB input with direct digital connectivity for iPod/iPhone/iPad, universal port for DAB radio and iPod dock add-ons

**Accessories supplied** FM/AM antennae, set-up microphone, remote handset

**by** Onkyo, Osaka, Japan

**Distributed by** Onkyo Europe GmbH, The Coach House, 81a High Street, Marlow, Bucks SL7 1AB

**Tel** +44 (0)1628 473350

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Bryan Baker (egtr); Urbanicity

Orchestra of New York / David Chesky

Chesky **CD** HQCD351

(from HDTracks.com)

Well, it's certainly challenging, from the "better than CD" 48kHz/24-bit format to the accompanying booklet, which runs to 290 pages of PDF and has complete scores for all three works, plus scores for those wishing to play along with what sounds like a fiendishly tricky solo part in the Concerto.

The pieces themselves won't be to every taste, and beg for more melodic flow at times, but there's no doubt that the recordings are exemplary, having a superb dynamic range and plenty of detail to keep everything in this busy music crystal clear.



**BYRD**

Complete Consort Music

Phantasm / Laurence Dreyfus

Linn **CD** CKD372

Recorded in Merton College Chapel, Oxford – Phantasm is Consort-in-Residence at Magdalen – by Philip Hobbs, the disc has a fine combination of close focus on the intricate playing of the viols, beautiful string tones to distinguish the instruments and just enough ambience in the surround channels to suggest the extent of the space around the performers.

It's another one of those delicious Linn recordings that ensures the label's output is always worth exploring, and I am sure it is another of those discs I am going to find myself playing rather a lot.



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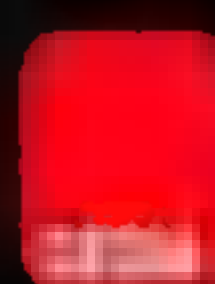
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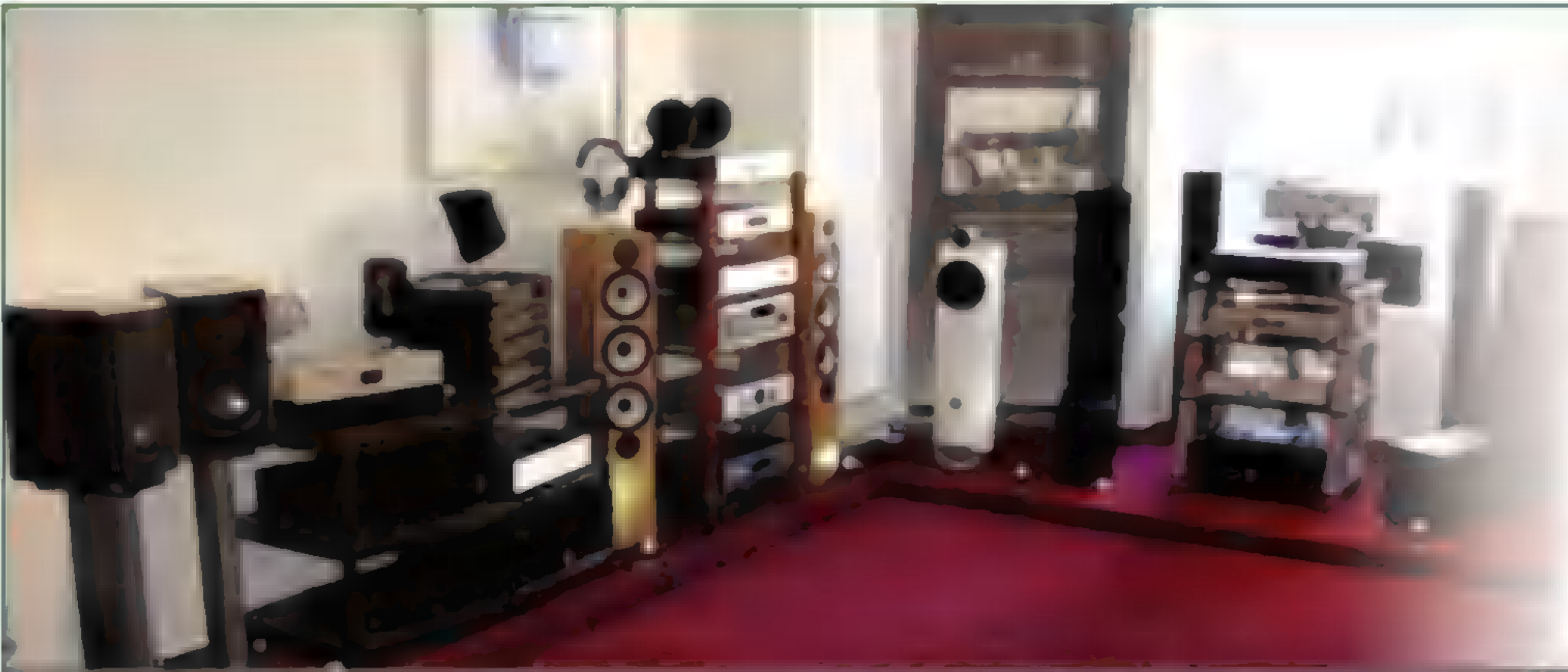
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## ELAC FS247

# An elegant speaker design with a rich, free-breathing sound

The proprietary technology in these German-made loudspeakers is used to good effect, says **Tony Williams**

**T**he ELAC FS247 speakers are far from new. In fact, they made their debut at the 2007 IFA show in Berlin and the company says the slim floorstanders have become one of its most popular models in Europe. Now, with the recent appointment of Atacama Audio as its UK distributor, the 85-year-old company is hoping its range, mostly handbuilt in Kiel, Germany, is going to make a greater impression on the British market.

It's not the only German speaker company targeting the UK market, which for a long time was dominated by "made in Britain" products. That always made for interesting visits to the annual High End Show in Frankfurt and, more recently, Munich. The ELAC room at the High End Show is usually an attention-grabber, not least because the company often has speakers in eye-catching finishes, such as the geometric primary colours of speakers designed as a tribute to Mondrian and the De Stijl group.

The FS247 speakers reviewed here are more restrained, being finished in high-gloss

black, and retailing for just on £2000 a pair. Yet they are unmistakably ELAC speakers, from their use of the company's JETIII ribbon tweeter with its optional Dispersion Control foam surround to the striking Crystal Membrane aluminium diaphragms of the 15cm midrange and bass units. The design is also unusual in that it has two tuning ports: one is rear-venting and is supplied with foam bungs to restrict its airflow and a plug to close it completely if required, while the other exits downwards between the base of the main cabinet and the plinth.

While the FS247 looks like a big speaker in photographs, it's actually fairly compact, standing just over a metre tall and only 22cm wide. The all-up weight of 16kg per speaker hints at the solidity of the cabinet construction, and both the carpentry and gloss finish on the review pair were impeccable.

This is a 2.5-way design, with biwireable terminals being provided and the substantial crossover operating at 450Hz between the bass and midrange units, with that ribbon tweeter coming into play at 2.5kHz. And while the nominal impedance is 4 ohms, that's not unusual these days, and the 89dB/W/m sensitivity makes them relatively easy to drive.

### PERFORMANCE


It doesn't take much exposure to the FS247 to understand why the design is popular: this is both a very easy speaker to set up and live with, and one capable of surprising with the richness and vibrancy of its sound.

The Dispersion Control ring is designed for use in rooms with little high-frequency absorption. In my rather cluttered, curtained room it wasn't required, and neither was the rear port closure: I prefer my speakers out in

free space, and in this position the ELACs sounded a bit feeble in the mid-bass when "bunded", improving hugely when the rear ports could breathe. However, it's impressive that such a range of tuning options are available and it should be possible to get a good sound in a wide variety of rooms.

What's striking about these speakers, quite apart from the effortless integration between the drivers, is the sweet yet forthright treble from that ribbon tweeter, which gives both superb imaging and remarkable openness, and the weight and speed available in the very low bass. These speakers are well suited to everything from the most intimate of recordings to large-scale orchestral works.

The weight on offer is never overbearing or plodding: rather, the ELACs are fast and deft in the bass but deliver a lot of it when required, with the ability to thump the chest with orchestral percussion. The overall impression is a long way from the old – and very unfair – stereotype of German speakers as being "all bang and tizz": the sound here is superbly balanced, and while the FS247s never hold back, they always sound fully in control of what they're playing, even when driven hard.

This is a thoroughly well-sorted loudspeaker design, fully deserving of as wide an audience in the UK as it has in other markets. I'm glad I finally got to listen to it. 



## ELAC FS247

**Type** Floorstanding loudspeaker

**Price** £2000/pr

**Drive units** JETIII ribbon tweeter, two 15cm aluminium-cone woofers

**Nominal impedance** 4 ohms

**Sensitivity** 89dB/W/m

**Frequency range** 20Hz-50kHz

**Recommended amplifier power** 30-250W

**Finishes** Black or White High Gloss, Cherry or Mocha Veneer, Titian Shadow

**Dimensions** (HxWxD) 102x22x32cm

**Made by** ELAC, Kiel, Germany

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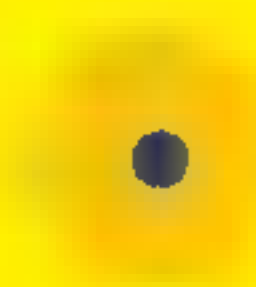
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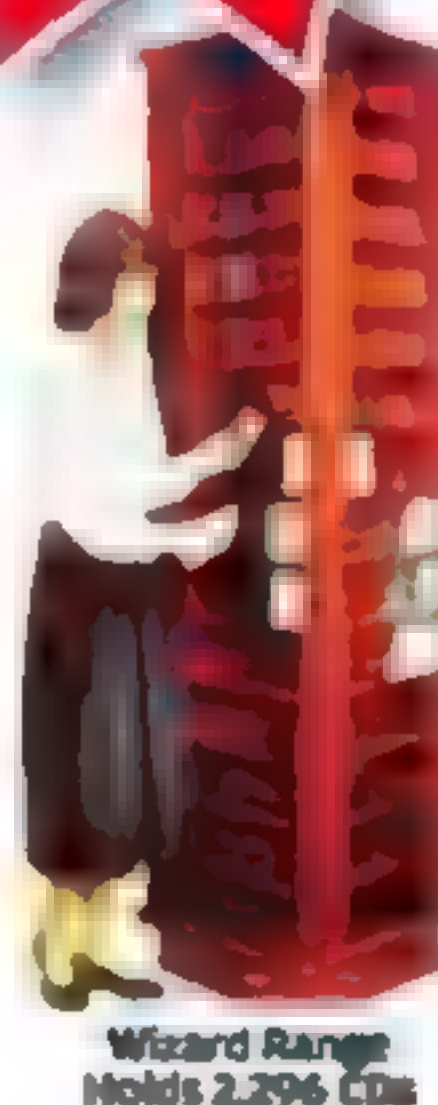
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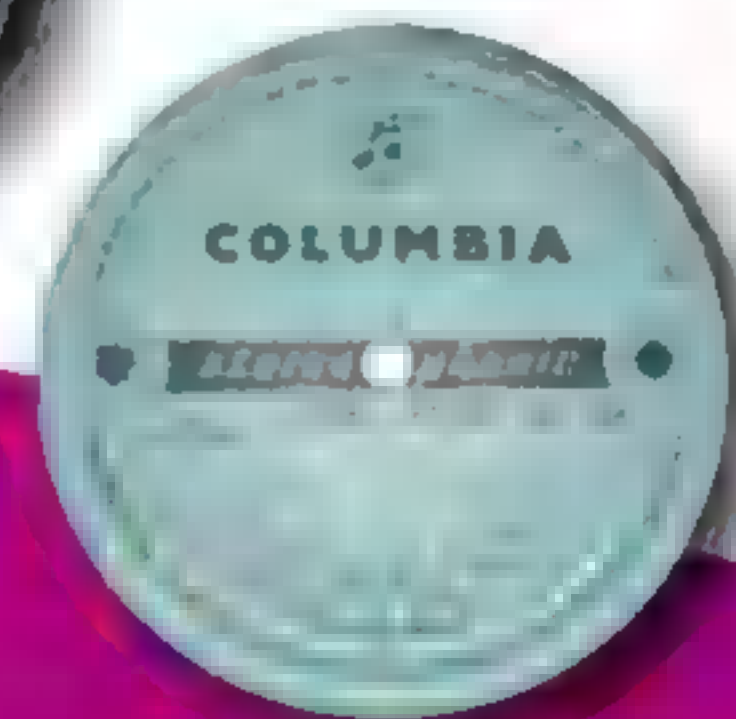


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# My Music

Film composer **Atli Örvarsson** on studying with Hans Zimmer and learning to play ancient instruments for his new film *The Eagle*

Growing up in the small town of Akureyri, Iceland, I was inundated by music. To this day, my father's main job is as an accordion player, and several members of my extended family are musicians. Although my mother was, and still is, an avid classical music lover, we listened to all sorts of music. There was only one radio station in Iceland and it played mostly classical but traditional Icelandic music, too.

I started my musical studies at the age of five. One of my uncles was a prominent musical educator in northern Iceland and, during a visit to him with my grandpa, the idea came about that I might have a musical upbringing. I started off on piano and then, when I was six, I took up the recorder. At seven, I switched to trumpet and that was my main instrument for a while. I played mainly classical but at school I was exposed to all kinds of music. I remember playing in the pit for *My Fair Lady* in my early teens.

Around the same time, a new music teacher came to our school who was familiar with jazz. After joining the big band, I became more interested in playing rock'n'roll and pop music. I played keyboards and trumpet in a band, Sálín hans Jóns mínns, who are still quite popular in Iceland.

But I was still searching to fulfil my ambition, although I didn't know what that ambition was! I ended up going to Berklee College of Music in Boston and spent three years there. I went thinking I was going to major in piano and then I came across the film-scoring department by accident. I took a class and my search was over. I fell in love with the alchemy of putting music and images together. After



**'I fell in love with the alchemy of putting music and images together'**

Berklee, I was given tremendous opportunities by both TV composer Mike Post and film composer Hans Zimmer. In TV, you have to write a lot of music in a short amount of time. You have to turn off self-criticism and go with it. With Hans I experienced the polar opposite. He loves to focus on the detail of the music, and I would spend three weeks on

one piece of music, which was a real luxury.

For my latest film, *The Eagle*, starring Jamie Bell and directed by Kevin Macdonald, I was faced with the task of writing music for a film set in 140AD in Scotland. I didn't know where to start. Kevin Macdonald wanted the film to feel like it could come off the screen, for it to be natural to

that time. He was instrumental in my coming over to England, Scotland and Ireland to look for musicians. And so I put away my composer's hat and went on a sort of archeological dig – finding material and letting that guide me to the music I came up with. I met a wonderful man called Dr John Purser who lives on Skye and has spent a lot of time researching ancient Scottish music. He became my musical guide to ancient Scotland. Which was how I found myself in a church in Edinburgh with him and all these old instruments – horns, ram's horns, hollow stone pebbles... We started recording these and making music. But I looked far and wide, beyond Scotland. In Ireland I found the Neff Brothers and spent a day with them improvising on fiddle pipes and Irish whistles.

In Edinburgh, I was very tickled by the ram's horn and asked to try it. There's a complete freedom when you play an instrument for the first time and have no preconceived notion of how to do it. By playing some of the instruments myself, I think I added to the "handmade" quality the director was after.

It was very important for me that I didn't raid these cultures and then mutilate them. When I returned home to LA, I began a sort of musical collage art, combining the sounds we had recorded with my more tonal compositions. I wanted to be respectful of these people and their musical traditions but, at the same time, being an "outsider", I had a certain amount of freedom, which helped me serve the film. From what I've heard, the people I met are happy with what I've done. They're still talking to me – mostly! ☺  
*The Eagle* is out on DVD on July 25



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Stuttgart State Orchestra / Dennis Russell Davies  
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I never fail to be inspired by this piece, taken from Pärt's seminal 1985 album "Tabula rasa".



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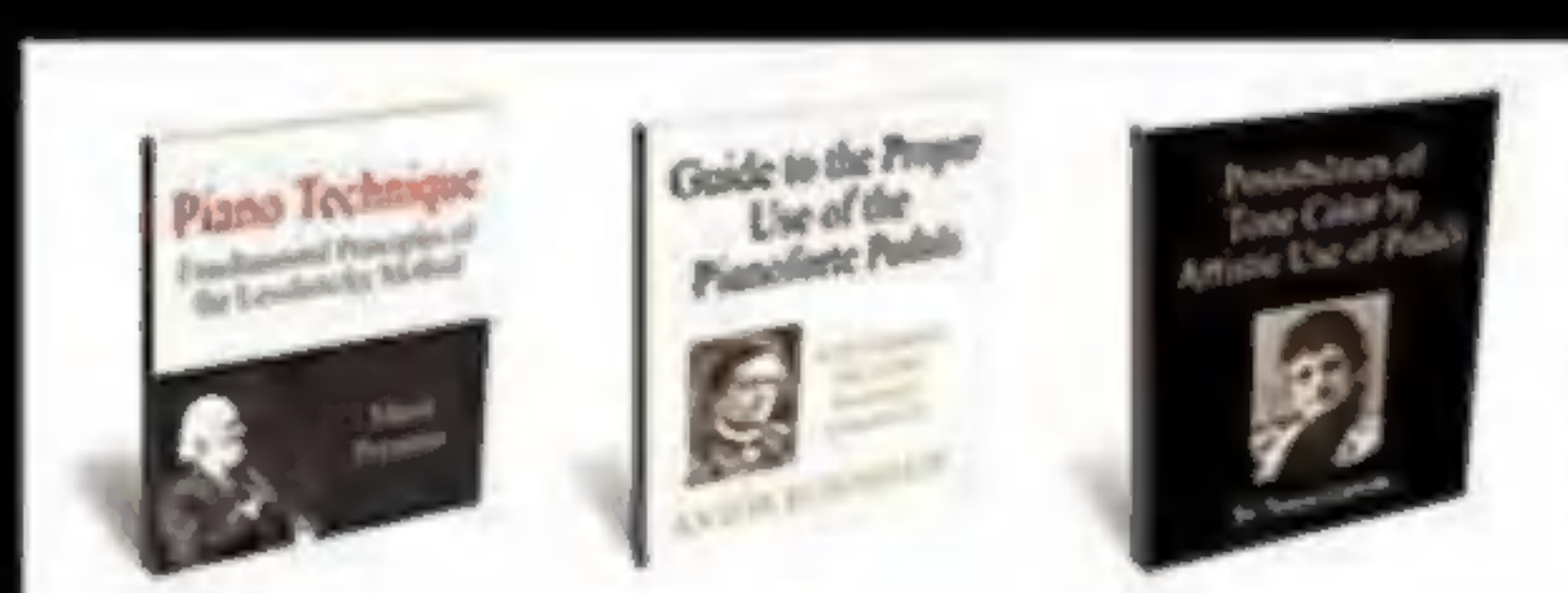
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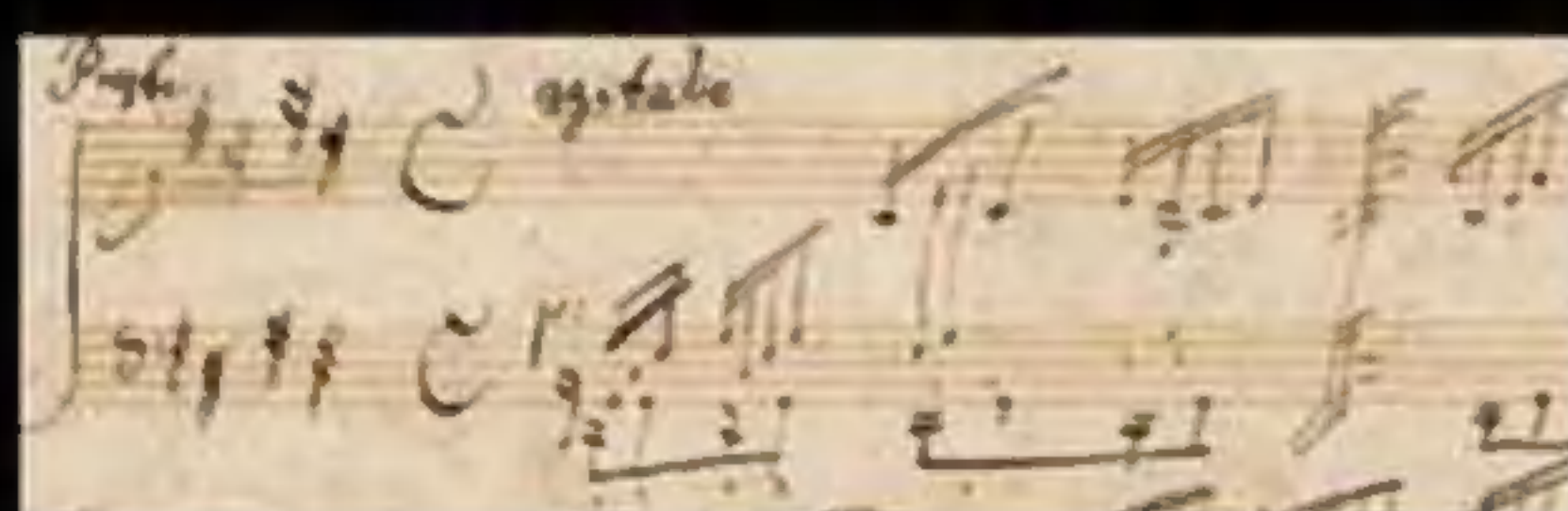
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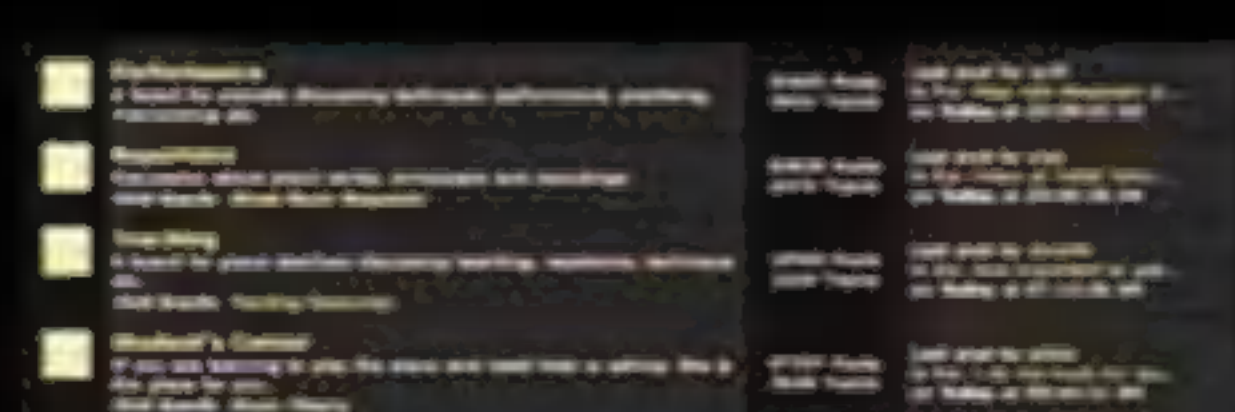
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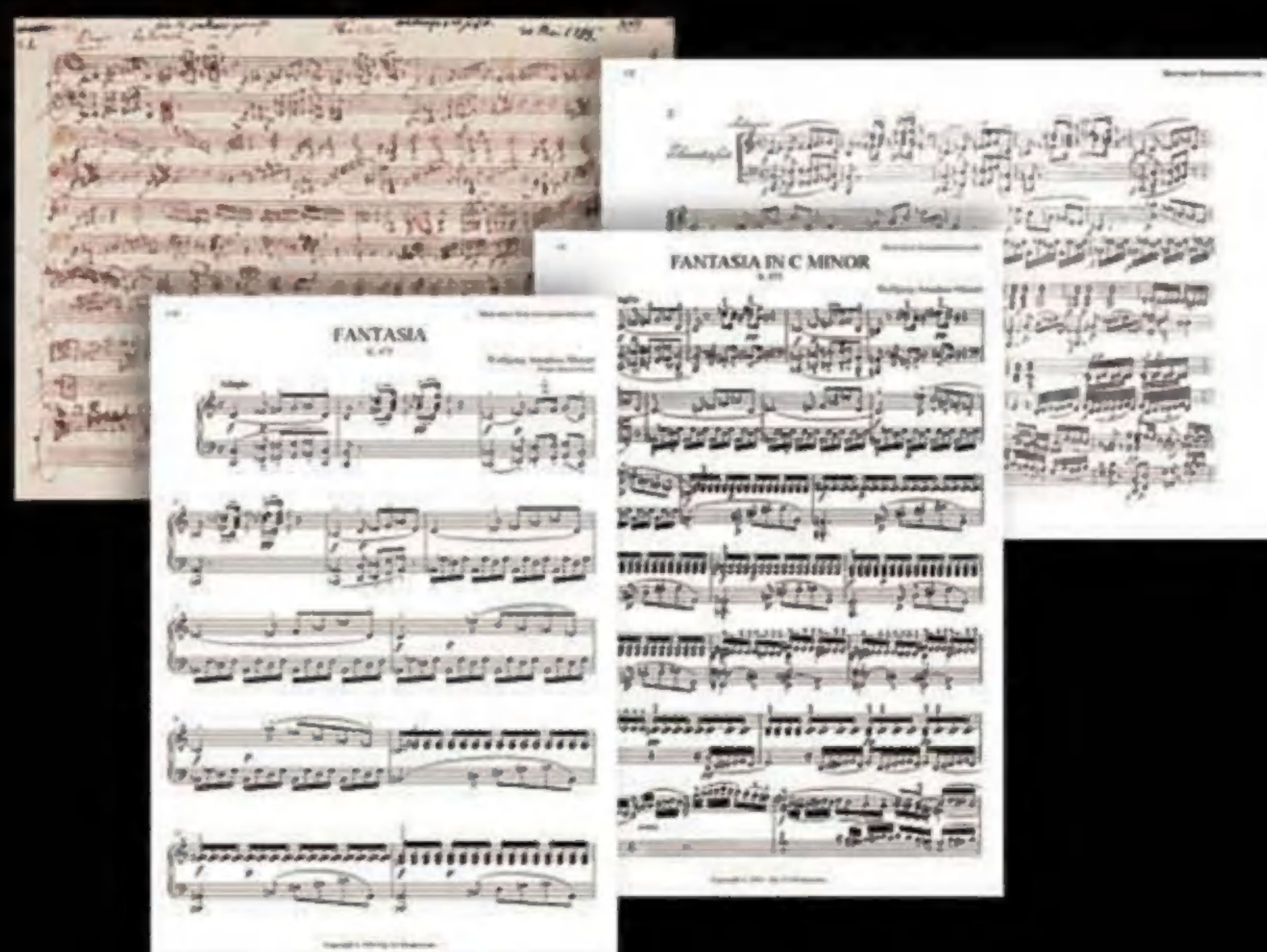
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Brennan JB7  
shown  
actual size



# A musical Tardis, this real size Brennan JB7 can store, browse and play up to 5000 CDs.

## Introducing the new and truly amazing Brennan JB7

What's the point in owning hundreds of CDs worth thousands of pounds if you never listen to them? The problem with CDs is that it's quicker to make a cup of coffee than dip into a CD. Try timing how long it takes to pick a CD, load it in the CD player, play a snippet from a track or two, eject it and put it back where it came from. Then there is the problem of finding music. The print on a CD spine is tiny. What if the track is on a compilation CD? What if the CD is in the car? Then there is the clutter. You need to keep your CDs near the player or you won't play them. So you are forced to share your living space with literally hundreds of cheap plastic boxes.

CDs are a great way to listen to music but they are also inconvenient, inaccessible and a bit of a chore.

### The Brennan JB7 is a CD player with a hard disk that stores up to 5,000 CDs - and that's not all

It saves space and clutter and delivers near immediate access to an entire music collection. JB7 owners rediscover then fall in love with their music again simply because the Brennan makes it so accessible.

The Brennan also records from vinyl and cassette so you can enjoy your entire music collection but keep the originals in another room or retire them to the attic.

Small enough to pick up with one hand yet big enough for a lifetime of music, the Brennan JB7 is one man's brilliant idea for everyone's forgotten music. It's only available direct from Brennan at [www.brennan.co.uk](http://www.brennan.co.uk).

#### Key features

- ▶ Browse albums by spinning the volume knob - push to play ▶ Display track names as they play ▶ Delete tracks you don't like ▶ Seven rainbow colour coded playlists ▶ Segue function blends one track into the next ▶ One touch record from vinyl, cassette or radio ▶ One button plays the entire music collection at random ▶ Plays MP3 downloads - future proof ▶ Clock with alarm ▶ 60 Watt, 4.8 x 16 x 22 cm steel and aluminium construction ▶ Backup music to external USB hard disk for safe keeping ▶ You can use it with your existing hi-fi or on its own

#### Over 10,000 sold. Lots of happy customers.

Until you actually own a Brennan or at least see one operating, you can't really put into words how wonderful and amazing it is. You wonder how something so small, compact and stylish can do so much! Now, with the touch of a button on the Brennan, it randomly plays music and I no longer have to make such decisions by myself. It makes them for me." Mr G. Patterson, N. Ireland

#### Money back guarantee

If you're not suitably impressed with your Brennan JB7 we'll collect it free of charge and refund you in full.

#### The face behind Brennan

Martin Brennan, who designed the JB7, has worked with Sir Clive Sinclair and Sir Alan Sugar and has designed over 20 silicon chips in his career. He was a real pioneer in the computer games industry - he played a central role in the design of the worlds first 64 bit games computer. Ever since CDs were invented Martin wanted a CD player that would hold his entire CD collection. He wanted something as simple to use as a light switch but at the same time something that would let him find a particular track without leaving the armchair.

#### A word about copyright

"In 2006 the record companies said unequivocally that they are happy for you to load your own CDs onto a hard disk but the Advertising Standards Authority have asked us to tell you that it is unlawful to copy material without the permission of the copyright holder. Confused? Find out more and have your say at [www.brennan.co.uk](http://www.brennan.co.uk)"



Martin  
Brennan

To get the whole story on the Brennan JB7 and order visit [www.brennan.co.uk](http://www.brennan.co.uk)

**brennan**